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# MAKING GOD VITAL

OR

JESUS' IDEA OF GOD

FOR

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

BY

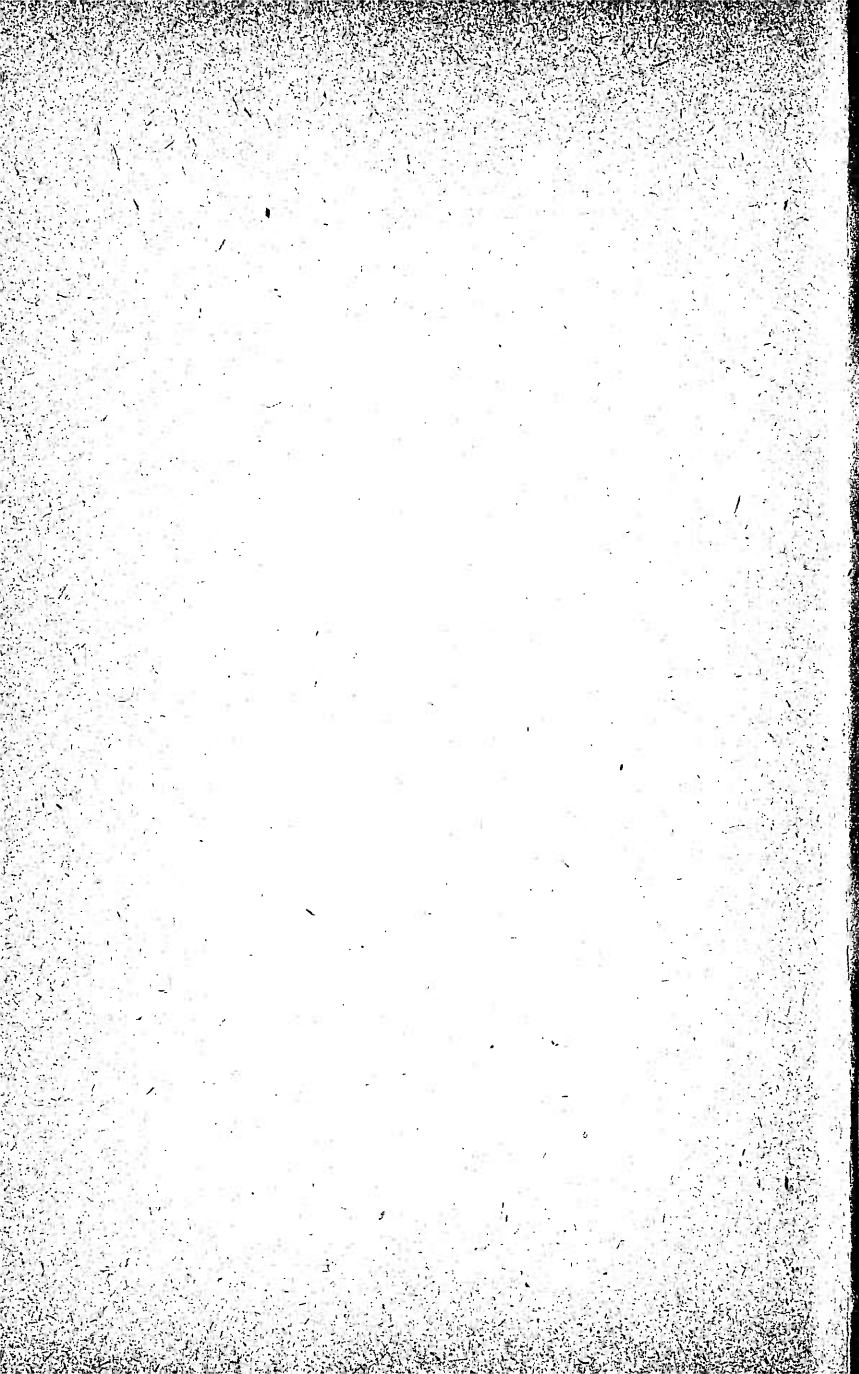
STANLEY SCOTT, D.B., Ph.D.

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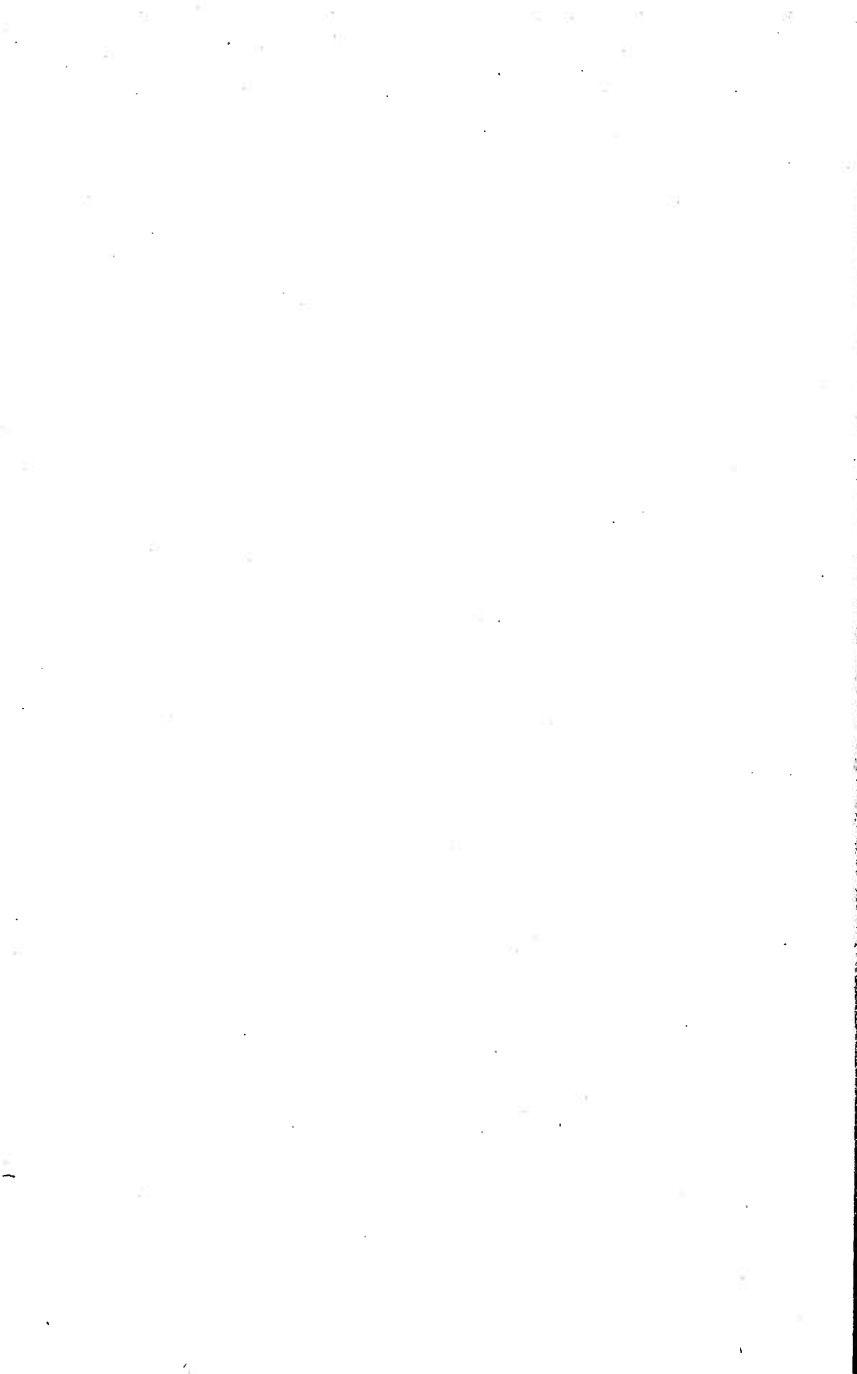
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STANLEY SCOTT, D.B., Ph.D.

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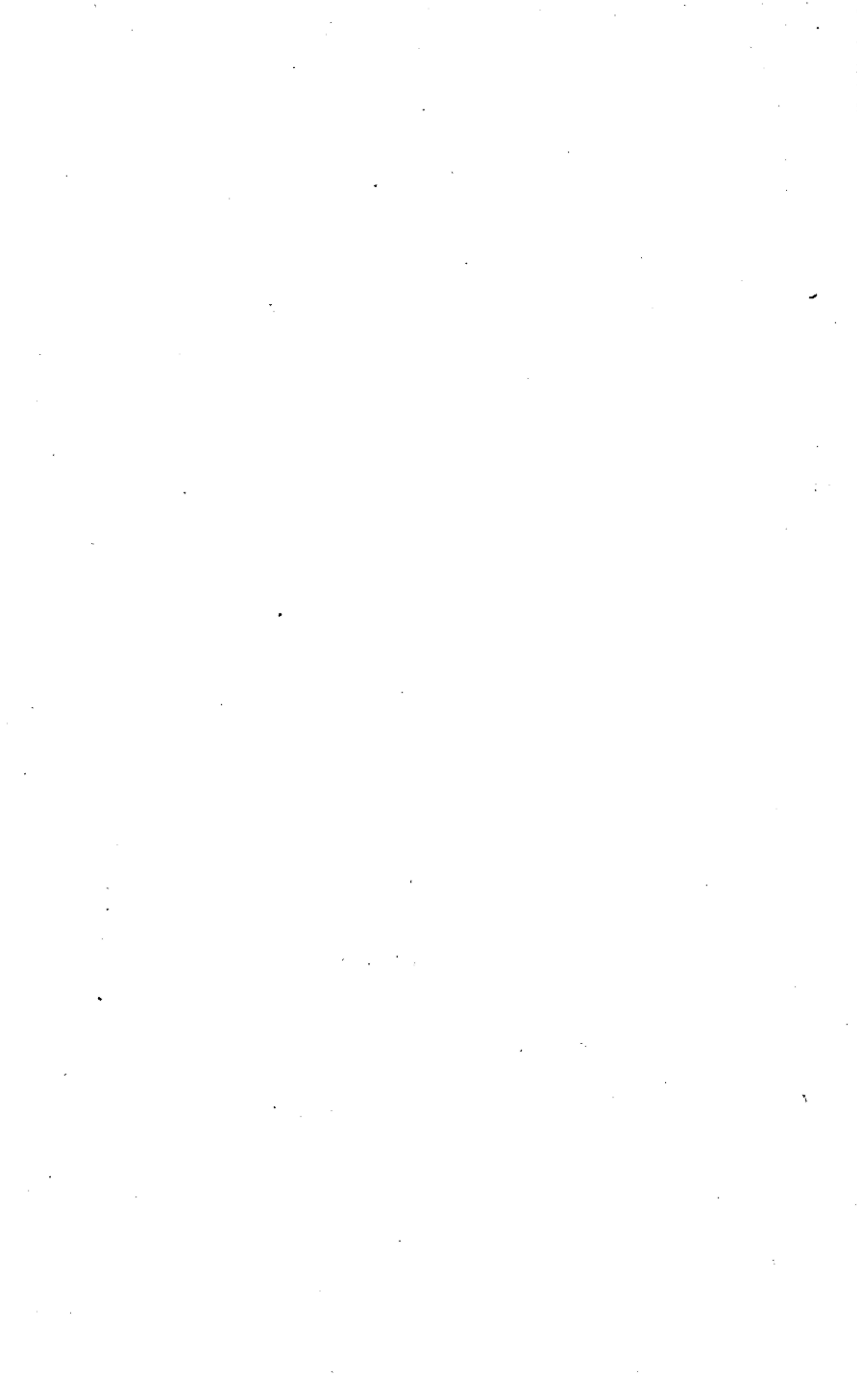
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TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER .  
WHO FIRST TAUGHT ME THAT THE  
WAY OF LIFE IS THE WAY OF  
FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.



## P R E F A C E

Man's view of God, it is generally agreed, determines to a large extent the conduct of man. That there have been changes in the content of man's thought of God, and in the type of conduct that man feels is in harmony with the will of God, would also be admitted by most people. Each generation of Christian people must seriously face the question as to whether they are seeking fellowship with the God that Jesus knew and loved, or whether they have in mind a different sort of God. The question must take a central place in the minds of those who are considering the points which ought to be made prominent in our time in the work of Religious Education. As far as direction has been given to the thoughts presented through the study of books, the writer wishes to acknowledge his great indebtedness to this source,—a partial list being included. In addition much help has been received from teachers of religion in Canada, England, and the United States. While this study was being made, the delightful fellowship of the pupils, teachers, and parents connected with "Center Church" Sunday School, Hartford, Conn., was most stimulating. The writer is particularly grateful for the suggestions and criticisms of Professor A. J. W. Myers, Ph.D., of the Hartford School of Religious Pedagogy, a man who is both learned as a scholar, and beloved as a teacher. Under his direction this study has been carried out. At the Hartford Seminary Foundation a unique opportunity was presented for study and research. Helpful assistance from my wife has turned what would often have seemed a drudgery into a joy.

STANLEY SCOTT.

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Biblical quotations in this book are from the American Standard Bible (Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York) unless otherwise stated.

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## INTRODUCTION

One cannot but feel that there should be a greater appreciation in our day of the idea of God that Jesus had, and it ought to be realized more and more that where Christianity has departed from the God of Jesus it has departed from the most vital and effective element in its faith. Where God on the one hand was presented as the same yesterday, today and forever, and on the other hand taught as having varying relations to mankind as are handed down in the Old and New Testaments, and the survivals of Greek thinking which have been preserved in Christian theology, the presentation of the idea of God was bound to be controversial and apologetic. In our time, men are learning to appreciate in a new way the preëminence of Jesus. A study of any phase of his thought as presented in the Gospels is fascinating and illuminating. In beginning this work, a study was made of all the references in the Gospels bearing on Jesus' idea of God, and in the first two chapters there is set forth briefly what was found.

Jesus did not aim at teaching a new God. He did not leave any sermon about God. But in studying the Gospels one immediately feels that there is a wholly new "atmosphere" presented,—a different relationship to God and a different claim on one's time and interests. His great contribution to the thought of his time and his great inspiration for us is that he taught that men can live in close fellowship with God, and ought to, as he did; and that this relationship to God will give a definite direction to character and conduct. According to our records, Jesus' main emphasis was the message of the Kingdom of God. The idea of a right relation to God and to man which the Kingdom calls for should be put central in man's thinking and acting. The work of Religious Education will only come

to its own when the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is thus given its right place.

An over emphasis on matters which have only a distant bearing on the central point of emphasis in Jesus' ministry (and in many cases no bearing whatever) has brought the churches of our day into an attitude of suspicion and hesitancy. Often when we should be marching on with Christ, we are wasting our energy. It is important for the church today to bear in mind three things: (1) Jesus lays emphasis on matters which are different from those which tend to divide the churches of our day. (2) The insight of Jesus into man's need was so true that the church that does not put central the truths that Jesus felt man stood most in need of fails to meet the needs of the day. (3) The church best makes these truths vital by beginning with the young. As far as the intimacy of Jesus with the Father can be shared in by his followers in worship, in thought, and in the carrying out into life of His will, it is the first duty of the Church School to aid in making such an experience real. It is with the view of making a contribution to this task that this study has been undertaken. The writer feels that in many places this work will appear sketchy, and by no means exhaustive, but hopes that others may find these pages at least suggestive.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AS A SOURCE

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

- I Introduction: Similarity between Jesus' problem and our own.
- II The Problem of the Dependability of the Sources.
  - 1. Steps in transmission.
  - 2. Interpretation necessary.
- III The Views of Jesus in contrast to Contemporary Views.
- IV Jesus' Attitude to God.
  - 1. Intimacy.
  - 2. Jesus is united with God's purposes.
- V God's Interest in Man.
  - 1. Extensive and Intensive.
  - 2. God as "Father".
  - 3. Rewards and Punishments.
  - 4. God's Plan.
- VI Man's Response.
  - 1. Faith.
  - 2. Love.
  - 3. Perfection.
  - 4. Helper.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AS A SOURCE

#### I. SIMILARITY BETWEEN JESUS' PROBLEM AND OUR OWN.

Our problem today is the same as it was with Jesus: among the various ideas about God and terms used to describe Him, to proclaim one that is comprehensive and vital. In his time there were the Old Testament, the Apocryphal literature, and the idea of God as emphasized by contemporary leaders, presenting God in various aspects. We have God as presented variously in the Bible; the God of the Hellenistic<sup>1</sup> influence; the God of the middle ages, distant and severe; the God of the period of individualism, finding expression in many hymns; the God of modern thought, democratic in His interests, international in His range, in harmony with and back of modern scientific research, intimate with man in the experiences of life, and demanding an expression of life that will improve social conditions. There is both similarity and confusion in these various presentations. However true it is that God is the same yesterday, today and forever, yet it is obvious that people at different ages have felt that He makes varying demands on their interests and actions.

How do all these views compare with the view Jesus had of God? One does not hesitate to study such a subject, because only confusion can result where attempts are made to present views about God which are not true to the teaching of Jesus, and to the experience of modern Christian people. The task

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3.

is made both fruitful and satisfying, because one finds from the outset that it becomes a study not of abstract thought but of the relationships of life. It was the interpretation of God, by words and deeds, that gave Jesus his task, so no study of his life gets closer to the heart of his whole mission than a study of his view of God.

## II. THE PROBLEM OF THE DEPENDABILITY OF THE SOURCES

### 1. *Steps in transmission.*

The question of sources immediately confronts us. Will there be any conflict between the record and the actual teaching? In dealing with Jesus' teaching, we must always bear in mind that there were various stages through which his words passed before being handed down in their present form. There was first the original teaching, as given on various occasions; then the impression made on diverse groups of hearers when his own words may sometimes have been misunderstood and misinterpreted; the modification of this impression as time went on, and the attempt was made to convey it to others by word of mouth. Next we have the earliest written records, the most important of which is the logia, as is the usual theory today, which contains the material common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark. Lastly, we come to our existing Gospels.

### 2. *Interpretation necessary.*

In all these stages modification could come about, through misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The Lord's Prayer and Beatitudes differ, for example, in the different accounts. The personal views of the writers, or contemporary views, whether a survival of Judaism or a development in the church,

must be considered in interpreting certain passages. It is a matter of much dispute whether Jesus held that the Kingdom would come through intervention from above or through the progress of brotherly relations among men. Those ideas, therefore, which are not in keeping with the main outlines of Jesus' life and teaching must be received with caution. It is possible also that Jesus' method of stating his teaching in terms meant to impress his hearers led him to make statements which could not be taken literally. One may reasonably infer that God would prefer repentance to the maiming of limb or eye (Mk. 9: 43, 45, 47).

### III. THE VIEWS OF JESUS IN CONTRAST TO CONTEMPORARY VIEWS.

There is, on the whole, a quality about Jesus' teaching about God, which makes his teaching stand out in marked contrast to that of traditional Judaism and such presentations as we have in the apocalyptic writers and John the Baptist. "And behold, he cometh with ten thousand of his holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy the ungodly; to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Enoch 1:9). "Whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17). Such ideas presented God as severe and revengeful. Jesus' idea of God stands out in contrast to such a conception and is more akin to certain conceptions in the Psalms and Prophets.

### IV. JESUS' ATTITUDE TO GOD.

In dealing with Jesus' view about God, we shall look first at Jesus' relationship to God, second at his teaching which

revealed the character and will of God, and lastly, at the teaching which shows the response man should make to such a God. This larger scope is necessary because Jesus did not leave us a system of theology. In this chapter we shall consider the Synoptic Gospels, and afterwards examine the Fourth Gospel.

### 1. *Intimacy.*

In studying the records one cannot help but sense the intimacy Jesus feels with God—the intimacy of real personal communion. The Jews avoided the name of God and avoided approaching Him except in prayer and worship. They used ponderous titles that lacked the personal note. The Holy One, the Blessed, the Highest, Heaven, the Glory, the Word were terms used in their prayers.<sup>1</sup> Jesus brought God close to man by speaking of Him as Our God, Our Father. It is not the use of the word "Father" that is unusual. It is frequently found in other writings. But it is in the meaning he puts into it and the sort of attitudes that are called for that make Jesus' term "Father" unique.

Renan (*Vie de Jesus*, p. 78) reminds us that "Jesus had no visions. God does not speak to him from without. God is in him. He feels that he is with God, and he draws from his heart what he says of the Father." One finds Jesus often in prayer, not repeating the formal prayers of regular worship, but spending time with God in the intimacy of real fellowship. It was an intimacy that did not lack reverence. He has only condemnation for those who pray for the mere show it offers to others: "to be seen of men." The prayers of Jesus that we have in the Synoptic Gospels are very few and very brief. His advice is that prayer should be a private matter,

<sup>1</sup>See the list of titles for God in Walker: *The Teaching of Jesus and the Jewish Teaching of His Age*. Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 1923. p. 39.

carried on in one's own chamber, where one has uninterrupted contact with God. He was drawn also to the places of public worship and felt the value of common worship. There is a note of reverence and respect in his reference to the Father's house, in his reply to his parents when he was found, at the age of twelve, in the temple, and his motive in cleansing the temple was to keep it as a "house of prayer." Nothing was to stand in the way of this intimacy. The traditions of the Pharisees tended to make God seem remote and so were condemned. They made the word of God void. Intimacy with God, however, was not to be presumed upon. In his temptation he said, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God" (Mt. 4:7).<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Jesus is united with God's purposes.*

Intimacy with God also had its responsibilities. The people felt that it was God's message, not his own that Jesus gave. "Now it came to pass while the multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret" (Lk. 5:1). In healing the ten lepers, Jesus did not expect thanks for himself, but said, "Were there none found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger?" (Lk. 17:18). And at the end of his career, though he shrinks from the Cross, yet he is willing to go through with the experience if it is God's will.

## V. GOD'S INTEREST IN MAN.

### 1. *Extensive and Intensive.*

The close intimacy that was seen between Jesus and God should be repeated between man and God. God has a close

<sup>1</sup>All quotations are from the American Revision unless otherwise stated.

interest in every condition and concern of life, and longs for this intimate response. The traditional Jewish view was that God cared for man because he was a Jew, not because he was a man. If the Jew kept the law, he came under the care and protection of God. The God of Jesus is so different. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good" (Mt. 5: 45). In that series of parables that we find in Luke's Gospel (Lost Sheep, Coin, Prodigal Son), He is presented as offering forgiveness and a welcome to all who repent (Lk. 15).

The God of Jesus is one who meets the practical needs of life. He is interested in the common concerns of man, the problem of food, and of clothing. Your Father knows that you have such needs. His love and care extend even to the animal world, so that not even a sparrow falls without His notice (Mt. 6: 32, 10: 29f). And moreover He is willing to help in our best thoughts. It was the Father who revealed to Peter the true meaning of Jesus' life.

## 2. *God as "Father."*

For Jesus, no other conception than Father could be used for God. When McGiffert<sup>1</sup> says that Jesus did not go beyond his countrymen in emphasizing the Fatherhood of God, he tends to minimize the meaning of Fatherhood as used by Jesus. For Jesus, God was One Whose affection was constant, Whose watchful care encouraged trust, Who always gave His best. For the Jew, the main thought of God centred around discipline and judgment. Note the titles used in addressing God, for example, in Third Maccabees: Lord, Lord, King of the Heavens and Sovereign of all Creation, Holy among the Holy ones, only Ruler, Almighty. With the conception of God held up to the time of Jesus, the term Father would never have

<sup>1</sup>A. C. McGiffert: *The God of the Early Christians*, Schribner's. 1924. p. 13.



become the sole title. The Jewish view of God was so cramped that it was believed that He could think only in terms of nationality. Jesus' view was so large that he declared that God could think of each unit in the many millions of mankind. It was God's desire that the family relationship be recognized, and men are asked to live the life in which their relation as sons is realized and responded to. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you that ye may be sons of your Father" (Mt. 5: 45). He looks forward to the time when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt. 13: 43).

### 3. *Rewards and Punishments.*

Those who will not accept the rule of the Father must take the consequences in the matter of punishment which this entails. The king and the master, in many of the parables, mete out punishment. God is not spoken of in the ordinary teaching as being a God of wrath, taking revenge on evil doers, but these parables do point out the fact that punishment does follow the evil doer. The unprofitable servant will be cast out (Mt. 25: 30). The hand or foot that offends should be removed rather than be cast into everlasting fire (Mk. 9: 43-47). He punishes even anger, and idle words, and impure thoughts. Mere calamity, however, is not necessarily to be thought of as punishment (Lk. 13: 1-5). On the other hand, Jesus does point out that there are rewards for those whose lives ring true. It is not His will that any should perish. "The Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Mt. 6: 4). "Take heed, that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 6: 1). He also forgives those who repent and welcomes their return.

#### 4. *God's Plan.*

This God of Jesus has a task to perform in the world, and He is working for its accomplishment. He can speak through His followers. "For it is not ye that speak but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Mt. 10: 20), "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up (Mt. 15: 13). God is one who is in control, "for all things are possible with God" (Mk. 10: 27), and He aims to bring all mankind into fellowship with Him. If all are not actually sons of God, they are at least potentially so, and God's desire is that the fellowship be completed.

### VI. MAN'S RESPONSE.

#### 1. *Faith.*

Men ought to have faith in the God that Jesus reveals. Moffat<sup>1</sup> concludes that it is faith rather than love which expresses for Jesus the normal attitude of man to God. "Have faith in God" Jesus said, in drawing the lessons from the withered fig tree (Mk. 11: 22). "It may have been," says Montefiori,<sup>2</sup> "the vivid and constant sense of God's presence and fatherhood which led Jesus to press the conception of faith more than was habitual in the Judaism of his day. The faith that he demanded was in God, not in himself, faith that God could do everything, and anything, and that by the power of such faith man could do much which otherwise would go beyond him." The faith that Jesus demanded was an active faith, calling man to use the strength and capacity given him by God, looking for His guidance, His will, but expecting

<sup>1</sup>Moffat: Lecture—Jesus on Love to God. Univ. of Pennsylvania. 1922. p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Hibbert Journal. April 1922. Art. The Religious Teaching of the Synoptics.

additional strength to carry it out. Faith in God's care should free men from anxiety in regard to their bodily needs; it should prevent fear on occasions of danger. "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" (on calming the storm at sea) (Mk. 4: 40).

## 2. *Love.*

Man is also to love God. Jesus gives his approval to the command<sup>1</sup> to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength, mind" (See Mk. 12: 30). Indeed, he puts this first among the commandments. Man is to make the matters of the kingdom his first concern. "Seek ye first his kingdom" (Mt. 6: 33). Jesus warns against whatever hinders entrance into the kingdom, such as pride and trust in riches. It is God's Kingdom, and is worth man's every effort and the surrender of every hindrance.

## 3. *Perfection.*

Nothing short of perfection should be man's goal. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5: 48). Through living the life of obedience and love, men become sons of God. "Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father" (Mt. 5: 44, 45). Man is to practice the difficult matter of forgiveness to his fellows. To love your neighbor is a commandment hardly secondary to the command to love God.

## 4. *Helper.*

Through Man's attitude to his neighbors, others are brought into fellowship with God. "Let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father

<sup>1</sup>cf. Deut. 6: 4, 5.

who is in heaven" (Mt. 5: 16). There was no mere waiting until a judgment before anything could be done. Man was to take an active part in the growth of God's cause now. His prayers are to be offered for its growth. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9: 38). Membership in the kingdom was not for those who only called Lord, Lord, but for those who did the Father's will (Mt. 7: 21ff), while workers of iniquity have no part in it (Lk. 13: 27f).

For Jesus, then, the great aim in life was fellowship with God, enjoying the Father's care and love, living in harmony with His will, and aiding Him in His task. That task is the promoting of love and good-will in the world. We do not find that this fellowship is mystical in character. Fellowship that leads to mystical union is brought out, however, in the Fourth Gospel, as we shall see in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### JESUS' IDEA OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE FOURTH GOSPEL

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

- I Introduction: A Brief Comparison with the Synoptics.
- II Jesus' Personal Religion.
  - 1. Reverence—Intimacy—Trust.
- III Jesus' Teaching About God.
  - 1. His Fatherly interest.
  - 2. God is Spirit.
  - 3. Unity between God, the Son, and Believers.
- IV Man's Response.
  - 1. "Eternal Life" is the goal.
  - 2. Man's approach to God is through the spirit.
  - 3. The place of Jesus in this fellowship.
  - 4. The place of prayer, love and service.
- V Summary.



## CHAPTER TWO

### JESUS' IDEA OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE FOURTH GOSPEL

#### I. A BRIEF COMPARISON WITH THE SYNOPTICS.

This chapter seeks to set forth the view of God that Jesus had, as revealed in the Fourth Gospel. We shall again examine, as we did in the Synoptic Gospels, the attitude that Jesus himself had to God; secondly, the idea he had of God, and thirdly the response that man was expected to make to such a God.

We do not propose to go into any of the problems of criticism regarding the Fourth Gospel, such as authorship or date. We shall merely follow the general tendency of the time in holding that "no final conclusion as to what Jesus taught can be derived from this Gospel until its reflection of that teaching has been compared with and checked by the testimony of the other Gospels."<sup>1</sup> One has the problem here to an even greater extent than in connection with the Synoptic Gospels of getting at the exact teaching of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel was written probably about the end of the first century, when important problems had to be faced in the church, and the leaders had to interpret and apply the Christian teaching to meet the historic situations. It must be recognized then that the problems dealt with, and the truths set forth, in the Fourth Gospel may be tinged with the historic background and the personal taste of the writer. In comparing the Fourth Gospel

<sup>1</sup>E. D. Burton: *The Teaching of Jesus, A Source Book*. University of Chicago Press. 1923. p. 4.

with the Synoptics, one finds vast differences in regard to the public ministry of Jesus, to the discourses attributed to him, to the attitude he takes in regard to his work, to the interpretation of his personality, and to the meaning he put into fellowship with himself and with God. Clement of Alexandria, in noting such differences, wrote that John perceived that the bodily Gospel had been written, and so wrote the spiritual Gospel (Eus. H. E. VI. 14: 5-7). The problem of discovering just what Jesus' teaching was is intensified when we try to discover where the words of Jesus leave off and the comments of the author begin. For example, Goodspeed in his recent translation thinks that John 3: 16-21 was not spoken by Jesus, while Moffat includes this passage in Jesus' discourse.

The amount of similarity that one finds, however, between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, as far as they relate to the subject under consideration, is most striking. It shows how abiding was the influence that Jesus exerted. The early Christians recognized that there was made through Jesus a new beginning, a fresh start, and were anxious to keep true to him. So, in spite of the time element, the personal element, the historical and philosophical problems to be solved, one finds the writer true in an amazing degree to the earlier tradition. "The doctrine of God," says Stevens,<sup>1</sup> "which the Fourth Gospel ascribes to Jesus is in no essential respect different from that which we have found in the Synoptics."

## II. JESUS' PERSONAL RELIGION.

### 1. *Reverence—Intimacy—Trust.*

Let us first look briefly into Jesus' own personal religion. As in the Synoptics, we find his reverence for God's house also

<sup>1</sup>G. B. Stevens: *The Theology of the New Testament*. Scribner's. 1899. p. 177.



mentioned. He drives out the money-changers from the temple area, and tells them not to make his Father's house a trading place. It is his constant desire to do his Father's will. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish his work (Jn. 4: 34)<sup>1</sup> The Jews resented his religious teaching and conduct in two ways: that he called God his Father, thus making, as they felt, himself equal with God, and also because he did not put first the traditional customs but in his interpretation of God's will sometimes broke Jewish traditions, as in the case of Sabbath observance. Jesus feels that in order to keep within the love of the Father, he must continue to do the Father's commandments. "And He that sent me is with me; He hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (8: 29). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love" (15: 10). While the Synoptics tell of more incidents where Jesus goes off in retreat to be alone with God, the Fourth Gospel makes Jesus speak more of the special intimacy between himself and God. He declares that he and God are one (10: 30) but this unity is one of spirit, since God is Spirit (4: 24) and is not inconsistent with an attitude of dependence. The Father is greater than he and shows him all that he himself does (5: 20). The son does not speak of himself, but carries out the Father's wishes in word and act (12: 49; 14: 10). It is the type of unity which Jesus looks for between his disciples and himself. Through Jesus they are to have the same fellowship with the Father (17: 20-23). Jesus wishes that his relationship with the Father be reproduced in men. (It is true that at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel Jesus is referred to as the Logos, suggesting a great gulf between him and mankind, but

<sup>2</sup>The Biblical references are from the American Revision unless otherwise indicated.

the writer makes it plain that the "Word became flesh," and makes much of the humanity of Jesus.) (Cf. Joh. Epp.) Jesus is willing to trust God and to follow His wishes, even if it means death (6: 51; 18: 11). So he goes to his death, believing that God is good, is loving, and is the source of real life for humanity.

### III. JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT GOD.

#### 1. *His Fatherly interest.*

The Fatherly interest that God has in man is frequently mentioned. When the authorities objected to the use Jesus was making of the Sabbath, Jesus replied that he was doing the sort of work that God had been doing (5: 17-20). In fact, it was at the Father's bidding that he did such works (5: 36, 37). Jesus' good works had their source in the Fatherly heart of God. It is because of God's love for the world (if John 3: 16 can be used as part of Jesus' words) that He sent His son to save it.

#### 2. *God is Spirit.*

In the worship of God, Jesus emphasized the fact that God is Spirit. It is not necessary, therefore, to go to any particular place in order to get in touch with Him, but He can be worshipped with equal advantage anywhere. (Note the position of "spirit" in the Greek: πνεῦμα ὁ θεός)<sup>1</sup> Real intercourse between God's spirit and man's is independent of material conditions. No one has seen Him; He is not visible to the senses. But one can see what He is like in His son (10: 38). Though the Father loves all, yet He has special blessings for those who love Christ and keep his word. "If a

<sup>1</sup>Jn. 4: 24.

man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (14: 23). The love of God to those who take this stand is compared to the love which He has for His son. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovest them, even as thou lovest me" (17: 23). Thus, as in the Synoptic Gospels, the highest values for man of the Fatherhood of God are only realized when he trusts and obeys.

### 3. *Unity between God, the Son, and Believers.*

God is the LIVING Father (6: 57); He "hath life in Himself (5: 26). This life is imparted not only to Jesus (5: 26), but to all who hear and believe Jesus. These pass out of death into life (5: 24). So there is a close spiritual unity between God, His Son, and believers. Men are united to this life-giving God, as branches are united to the vine (15: 1-6). In the Synoptic Gospels men are asked to be perfect as their Father is perfect. Similarly, in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus prays that the love that God has may be in them (17: 26). So God is brought close to the experience of men. Jesus speaks of God as RIGHTEOUS (17: 25) and as HOLY (17: 11). He is righteous because he rewards those who obey the words of His son; He is holy because He sets Himself over against the spirit of hate and unbrotherliness which belongs to the world. He recognizes that there is sin in the world, and hopes that through the son, men will find the true life (10: 9-11, 14-16; 11: 25, 26).

## IV. MAN'S RESPONSE.

### 1. *"Eternal Life" is the goal.*

For man, what are the highest values that God has to offer? A type of life that is called eternal. Eternal life consists in

knowing God and his messenger Jesus (17: 3). This gives man "abundant life" (10: 10). It was the sole purpose of the author of the Fourth Gospel to bring out this truth: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (20: 30, 31). Those who prefer to live their own lives will never enjoy eternal life (12: 24, 25). Those whose deeds are wicked hate and avoid the light (3: 19, 20). Those who have the opportunity of knowing the words and works of Jesus and yet reject him are the sinners (9: 39-41; 15: 22-24; 16: 8, 9).

## *2. Man's approach to God is through the spirit.*

In regard to the externals of religion, such as places of worship and traditional customs, Jesus insists that their value can be misjudged, as man's contact with God is a spiritual matter. To the woman of Samaria he says that the hour is coming, indeed has already come, when the true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit (4: 23). Jesus wants the temple to be used as a place for spiritual worship, instead of a place for business transactions (2: 13-16). The synagogue was a gathering place where Jesus sought for an opportunity to teach the truth about God (6: 59). A study of the Scriptures brought its reward to those who studied them with the right purpose. Wrong conclusions can be arrived at by taking the attitude that a mere searching of the Scriptures can bring eternal life. One must attend to the inner meaning, must search for God's purposes. The Jews of Jesus' day searched the Scriptures, but they did not hear the voice of God and so did not receive Jesus' words (5: 37-47). Jesus always puts right conduct before traditional customs. He was annoyed

that the Jews believed in circumcision as a rite that fitted in with Sabbath day customs but did not allow the doing of acts of helpfulness on that day (7: 22, 23).

### 3. *The place of Jesus in this fellowship.*

Man's approach to right fellowship with God and to the life that this fellowship brings is through Jesus. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (3: 36). It is essential for man's true nature and destiny that he have this life (6: 63), and this relation to Jesus (8: 31-36). The Jews of Jesus' day, like many religious people of all ages, tried to make the approach to God a difficult matter. Jesus tried to show how natural and simple it was. After Jesus' departure, the Spirit is to be the guide and interpreter of God (16: 13-15). He will carry on the work of Jesus, and will show through his working in man the truth about sin and righteousness and the judgment that belongs to those who resist (16: 8-11, 12-15). The judgment that Jesus speaks of is an immediate matter, and is connected directly with the rejection of Jesus. "He that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only Son of God" (3: 18). The consequences of such rejection are permanent (8: 24). This rejection is "sin" (9: 41).

### 4. *The place of prayer, love and service.*

In man's approach to God, he is to make requests of God, and the Father is anxious to give such things as will make the joy of man complete (16: 24). In order to be so generously treated by God, it is necessary first to be united to Jesus, and ask as one of his followers. "If you remain united to me, and my words remain in your hearts, ask for whatever you please

and you shall have it" (15:7—Goodspeed). Jesus would have man share with God the same intimacy that he enjoyed. As he remains within the love of the Father by keeping his commandments (8:29; 15:10), the same condition applies to man: that fellowship with Jesus and with God involves the keeping of Jesus' words. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him . . . . . If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (14:21, 23b). But it is not a formal keeping of commandments that is required. These commandments are kept because there is love. There is love in the heart of the Father; there is love in Jesus; and there is love in his followers. Those who oppose are ready to show their hatred, but they show their hatred because of their ignorance of what God is really like (15:18-21; 16:3).

God desires that all enter the fellowship of love. Jesus said that he came not to judge the world but to save the world (12:47). But his truth does test, and those who refuse the truth are condemned by the truth. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (12:48). Because of man's freedom, there must always be judgment accompanying salvation. God cannot bless those who reject His leading. Jesus hopes and prays that his followers remain united (17:11), and he suggests that their proper relations to each other are shown through acts of service (13:1-5, 12-15).

## V. SUMMARY

We have seen in this study that for Jesus the supreme aim of life is fellowship with God. This includes the desire to do

His will as well as to know Him. Acts of love and good-will are an expression of the Divine in man. In the Fourth Gospel there is the idea that fellowship with God is a mystical union, but this seems to be an addition which is not a part of the Synoptic presentation.

Jesus brought God close to man. Intimacy with Him is to be sought through personal communion. God's attitude to human life and to the world about should inspire trust. The attitude one takes to God and to life brings its rewards or punishments. The life of Jesus should awaken in men the desire to live as he lived, and thus express divine qualities in their lives. Man should aim at such perfection as God Himself has.

It is our purpose next to trace the problems which were before the church throughout the years of history which tended to separate the religious thinking of people from real life, and to show how the way has opened up in our time for a return to the God of Jesus. We have now begun to see that to know God as Jesus interpreted Him to mankind we must enter into such a personal relationship with God as Jesus exemplifies; we must know Him as Jesus knew Him in His goodness and His love; and we must have our lives directed to the highest type of life which has been revealed. The task of religious education must be to aim to make fellowship with God real, knowledge of God comprehensive and vital, and the expression of religious character a living force in the world. Such problems as are thus presented will occupy our attention for the latter part of this study.





## CHAPTER THREE

### CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE IDEA OF GOD

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

- I Introduction: The Original View.
- II Position of the Apostolic Church.
  - 1. The message of the early followers.
  - 2. Paul's contribution: Salvation valuable for its own sake, and the doctrine of the Trinity arises.
  - 3. God is LOVE.
- III Changes through contact with the Græco-Roman World.
  - 1. As found in New Testament.
  - 2. "The Greek Mind."
  - 3. Mystery Cults.
  - 4. Christianity in this new environment.
  - 5. The Nicene Problem.
- IV The Middle Ages.
  - 1. Augustine.
  - 2. Scholasticism and Mysticism.
- V Reformation Period.
  - 1. Lutheranism and Calvinism.
- VI The Transition Stage.
  - 1. God as Immanent.
  - 2. The starting point is in experience.
- VII Conclusion.
  - 1. The Changing Emphasis.
  - 2. The Permanent Elements.
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## CHAPTER THREE

### CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE IDEA OF GOD

#### I. THE ORIGINAL VIEW.

The idea of God that Jesus left to the world has now been briefly presented in the preceding chapters. For Jesus, God was the loving Father of mankind. His desire is to have intimate fellowship with His creatures. Man can put barriers between God and himself, and Jesus warns against such, as God desires that the intimacy between man and Himself be continuous. His loving care offers a welcome to all. It is the privilege of all to unite themselves with the Father and with one another in this family relationship and live in mutual trust, love and service. In this and the following chapters we shall see how the passing years brought problems which turned the minds of the people from Jesus' ideal of a life of joyful intimacy with God, and how there has been an opening from many sources for a return.

#### II. POSITION OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

##### 1. *The Message of the Early Followers.*

The early teachers of Christianity were faithful to the original teaching as far as they understood it. With the loss of their friend and teacher, Jesus, the apostles were thrown on their own resources. Though mourning the loss of their master, yet they rejoiced in the resurrection. They preached that the crucifixion was a crime, but that God's hand was seen in the raising of Jesus from the dead. Their gospel was a

call to repentance and remission of sins through faith in this risen Jesus. Thus was preparation to be made for the Kingdom of God. The head of this kingdom would be this same Jesus whom they had known, and whose return they were expecting. This was the only way of escape from the wrath of God, because of lives of rebellion and sin; the only way of salvation. "There is no salvation through any one else, for there is no one else in the world who has been named to men as their only means of being saved" (Acts 4: 12—Goodspeed's translation). Yearning for political freedom and a political standing in the world, their idea of salvation was to a large extent tinged with their political expectations.

2. *Paul's Contribution: Salvation valuable for its own sake, and the doctrine of the Trinity arises.*

Paul makes a contribution to the development of the Christian idea of God. He makes salvation of value for its own sake, not for political ends. This salvation came through Christ. He states, however, that this view is not peculiar to himself. "For I passed on to you, as of first importance, the account I had received, that Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures foretold" (I Cor. 15: 3—Goodspeed's translation). With the idea of salvation coming through Christ, as proclaimed by the early church, a new person was added to the Godhead. But, in addition, the early Christians became aware of a further addition to the Godhead. They had the experience of a new life, and this needed explanation. The Old Testament had spoken of the Spirit of God taking possession of a man and making him different from his usual state. Jesus had spoken of the Comforter who would come after his departure. Now they themselves were conscious of this Spirit. This was the Spirit of God; God dwelling in them. The Spirit

took hold of them in the form of a new enthusiasm, and to their minds, trained in Jewish thought, this was what was to be expected from the Spirit. Paul develops the idea of the Spirit, regarding it as a regular possession and an aid in normal experience.

Thus the doctrine of the Trinity arose. God was still over all, the Father of all. Jesus, His son, known to them, and about to appear again, had come from God to reconcile the world to God. Through the Holy Spirit, God had come to them. Their faith was not complete until they had the Holy Spirit. "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" (Acts 19: 2). Thus it was possible for Paul to write to the Corinthians: "Endowments vary, but the Spirit is the same, and forms of service vary, but it is the same Lord who is served, and activities vary, but God who produces them all in us all is the same" (I Cor. 12: 4-6—Goodspeed). He closes the second letter to the Corinthians thus: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (II Cor. 13: 14). The formulation of these conceptions of the contact of God in the world grew out of the experiences of the early Christians.

### 3. *"God is Love."*

God's immediate influence was recognized. They came to think of God in a new way, different from traditional Judaism. God had been thought of as holy and righteous, faithful and merciful. Now in their new experience of the Christian faith, their thoughts of God began to unite in one great word, "Love." God is LOVE. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I Jn. 4: 10). God is close to man, striving with him, giving His best for him. Because they knew Christ, both

Paul and John were brought into a closer intimacy with God. But with the exaltation of Jesus, as we shall see, a barrier was later placed between man and God, as far as such intimacy was concerned.

### III. CHANGES THROUGH CONTACT WITH THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD.

#### 1. *As found in the New Testament.*

Christianity was early carried outside the borders of Palestine. It was taught by people and to people who were trained in Greek philosophy. It had to make its way in a new environment. Let us trace next, then, what changes took place in the Christian idea of God until the formulation of the Nicene Creed in 325. It is probably not too much to say that at the end of this period such was the content of the discussions about God that the early Christians would almost have thought that their successors represented a different religion. Already in the New Testament, some of the results of this contact with Greek thought begin to show themselves. Beckwith<sup>1</sup> mentions three elements appearing in the New Testament which have a close relation to Greek thought, "the emphasis on the transcendence of God, the Logos doctrine, and the beginning of the doctrine of the Spirit of God as a distinct subsistence."

The place of Jesus became more and more exalted. Case<sup>2</sup> describes the change thus: "In the second century Christians were not endeavoring with anything like the zeal exhibited by Paul to persuade the Gentiles that their hope lay in allegiance to the God of the Hebrews. So far as the emotional reactions

<sup>1</sup>Beckwith, C. A.: *The Idea of God*. Macmillan. 1922. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>S. J. Case: *Social Origins of Christianity*. Univ. of Chicago Press. 1923. p. 194.

of the community were concerned, they had all been developing more and more in the direction of loyalty to Christ in his status as a heavenly being to whom they rendered worship." The aim was transferred from fellowship with God to loyalty to Christ.

## 2. *"The Greek Mind."*

The removal of the necessity of solving political and social problems, owing to the control exercised by their Roman conquerors, had turned the Greek mind to the discussion of philosophical problems. Their definitions were abstract and not in close touch with life. The Greeks defined God as the ultimate metaphysical essence, the absolute changeless reality. God was transcendent, far removed from the world, because different from the world. He is pure form, they maintained, and in order to have contact with the world of matter He must have a mediator. It is unworthy of Him to be in direct contact because matter is evil. The mediator between God and the world is the Logos. To the Greek mind, God was impersonal, and could be defined as intelligence, reason, form. This was a different approach to God from what would be found in the Hebrew view, which pictured God as personal.

## 3. *Mystery Cults.*

A second element in this Greek environment was the existence of mystery cults. Plato and Aristotle realized that their definitions of religion were framed for the cultured and the wealthy. But the mystery cults were not so exclusive. They offered to all a way of salvation through union with a Savior-God, such as Osiris or Mithra. Through identifying one's self with the Savior-God, by sharing his suffering, death, and resurrection through the ritual of the cult, salvation was assured.

#### 4. *Christianity in this new environment.*

As we have already noted, the Fourth Gospel links up the Christian faith with Greek speculations by identifying Jesus with the Logos. Paul helps to bridge the gap between Christian faith and the mystery cults by declaring that Christian salvation is a personal matter and is attained through union with Christ. He maintains in his letter to the Romans that salvation comes through confessing with the mouth Jesus as Lord, and believing in the heart that God raised him from the dead.<sup>1</sup> Each individual could thus become the possessor of eternal life. He does not need to wait for Jesus' return to enjoy his rule. Christ is a spiritual power in life, already coming in contact with men and transforming their lives. This idea of an invisible spiritual power was quite familiar to the Greek mind where God was thought of as essence. Paul's interpretation of Christianity for the Greek mind was successful, where Gnosticism failed, because Paul started with a Christian experience and interpreted it to Greek hearers, while Gnosticism on the other hand started with a foreign system of thought and experience, and tried to fit it into Christianity. The approach of Gnosticism was as follows: There was a big gulf between God and the world. No God would have been so stupid as to create the world. Only a wicked creator would have created so wicked a creation. The pure spiritual God has emanations from himself, and in the line of emanations, the farther removed from God the more wicked, the earth was finally created. Man's troubles came because he is a part of the evil world of matter. To get rid of troubles it is necessary to become identified with the Savior-God who is come to earth with such an over-supply of spiritual essence as to counter-balance the limitations of matter. This Savior-God was identi-

<sup>1</sup>See Rom. 10: 9.



fied with Jesus. In opposition to this tendency Monarchianism arose, with theories which could not be reconciled to a Trinitarian theology. According to this view, the Son and Spirit are only modes in which the one God manifests himself. We shall see, then, what doctrine was finally adopted by the church.

### 5. *The Nicene Problem.*

Christianity then in its Greek environment had the task of framing its doctrine regarding the nature of the contact of God with the world and the relation of God to the Son and the Spirit. The first problem found expression in the doctrine of the Logos, and the second, in the doctrine of the Trinity. Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Origen all gave much consideration to these problems. God was the source of creation and of redemption. He was far removed from experience but through the Logos his nature and will were revealed. The Logos became incarnate that men might be partakers of the divine essence. This Logos was not very God of very God, but was one step below God towards matter. The Father, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit were defined as three stages but all not matter; then as having various degrees of matter came angels, and men and demons. When Jesus became identified in their thought with the Logos, the problem became acute as to his relation to humanity. The Nicene problem was this: If Christ was the creator, then he must be less than, and subordinate to the Supreme God; if he was the Redeemer, then he must not be subordinate. The solution arrived at was a formal acceptance of both positions. Christ was declared to be the very God of very God, and also to have contact with the world of matter and of change. Arianism was declared to be heretical which held that the Logos was subordinate to God but was of like substance. Patripassianism was declared heretical which

held that the God-essence in pure form came to us in Christ who was one manifestation of the God-essence, the same God-essence that comes into the believer in the form of the Holy Spirit. If Christ is God, then God suffers. This approaches the orthodox doctrine of today,<sup>1</sup> but was then declared heretical.

We see, then, that the Nicene Creed made it possible for the Greek idea of God as eternal essence and the mystery cult idea of a Savior-God as Redeemer, and the Hebrew idea of God as Creator and Ruler, to be united in one statement. So the Christian faith grew and adapted itself to its changing environment, and made it possible for people whose life and thought had run in separate streams, to unite and worship together. Here the church leaders are to be commended. Yet in the framing of its position the church failed to point out the main emphasis of Jesus—intimate fellowship with God—and by its insistence on the acceptance of a creed as being the essential thing, it focussed attention on a static form rather than a dynamic force.

#### IV. THE MIDDLE AGES.

##### 1. *Augustine.*

The next stage in the development of the Christian idea of God is seen in Augustine's writings. For some time little attempt was made to find God in experience. Augustine starts with the definition that "the one and only true God is a Trinity; and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are rightly said and believed to be one and the same substance and essence." The three persons in the Trinity he regarded as the one God. But he held that God was not merely to be discussed, but to be experienced. Without God he felt incomplete. God was to be

<sup>1</sup>See pages 50-1.

talked to; to Him one can open the secrets of the heart. Sometimes Augustine felt the distance of God, sometimes the nearness, but he did not attempt to reconcile the two positions.

## 2. *Scholasticism and Mysticism.*

No modifications were made in the idea of God for the next thousand years. The discussions that took place defined the points already laid down more clearly, but on the whole tended to dwell on the speculative side and neglect relating the idea of God to practical life. This is the period of John Scotus Erigena of the ninth century, Abelard of the eleventh, Thomas Aquinas of the thirteenth, and Eckhart of the fourteenth. The Creed was declared to be authoritative, and all-inclusive, and it was the duty of Christians to accept rather than question. The councils had claimed to know the mind of Christ, and claimed authority because they represented the ecclesiastical line of succession, to declare what should be believed. Salvation depended on the acceptance by faith of this formal statement. The separation from life was further widened since the Middle Ages were not concerned with Greek speculations. The Hellenic world had come to an end. The thought outlook was different. The problems under discussion which brought about the framing of the Creed no longer existed. So the contents of the Creed came to be thought of as a metaphysical puzzle which were to be accepted on faith. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa* held that some truths of religion can be discovered through rational processes, others by revelation. You can reason about the existence of God, he maintained, because of the need of an Absolute, the need of intelligence in the great Designer; so also you can draw conclusions regarding His unity, His infinity, His self-existence. But you can not establish the Trinity through reason. The problem of the

Trinity is above reason and is known through revelation and must be accepted on authority. This view has been accepted pretty much without question since his day. Man is united to God through the death of Jesus. The justice of God must receive "satisfaction," therefore Jesus' death was necessary, and from this sacrifice, through the mercy of God, salvation comes to sinful men. Salvation and unity with God were thought of as apart from the relations of life.

Mysticism ran side by side with speculation in the mediæval centuries. For the mystic, knowledge of God had a value apart from speculation. It was a help to the inner life of the soul. The soul that seeks God through separation from all outward material things, and withdraws into its inner self, gets to know the true essence of God. Intuition gives a more personal knowledge of God than can be arrived at through revelation. Davison<sup>1</sup> quotes Hugo of St. Victor (12th Century) who puts scholasticism and mysticism side by side thus: "In two ways God dwells in the human heart, to wit, through knowledge and through love, yet the dwelling is one, since every one who knows him loves, and no one can love without knowing. Knowledge through cognition of the faith erects the structure; love through virtue paints the edifice with color" (*de Arca Noe Morali* 1.2 PLclxxvi 621). This is a very beautiful description, yet it lacks the note of active good will called forth in Jesus' teaching.

## V. REFORMATION PERIOD.

### 1. *Lutheranism and Calvinism.*

The idea of God did not form a central theme in Reformation discussions, yet the contribution of the reformers was

<sup>1</sup>Hastings: *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol VI. Art. God. p. 264.

significant. As we have seen, God was thought of as separate and apart from man. The gulf between God and man was bridged by intermediaries, like the Logos, and even the Virgin Mary. The reformers regarded all intermediaries as hindrances. Luther objected to the word "Trinity." He wanted to bring to the front again the God of the Scriptures, and did not find the word Trinity in the Bible. It had too formal a sound for him. He wanted people to think of God as a loving Father, offering forgiveness and free salvation to mankind. God was revealed in Christ. Without Christ God is only thought of as a stern and angry Judge. Through the work of Christ as Redeemer the way is made possible for forgiveness leading to communion with the Father. (He thinks of Christ not as the Logos, the Eternal Word, but as Savior.)

The Calvinists gave a more central place to the framing of a theology than did the Lutherans. The consciousness of God was the central note in Calvinism.<sup>1</sup> All thinking, feeling and action ought to be carried out under the consciousness of God's presence. This brings God into close, direct contact with the actions of men. God is omnipotent, omniscient, with unalterable decrees, Whose will is a sufficient reason for any type of action. The idea of God's love to man is not as prominent a feature in Calvinism as in Lutheranism. With both Luther and Calvin, the thought of the majesty of God prevented the approach to God in the attitude of intimacy.

The important point for us to note here is that Protestant theologians in their dependence on the Bible did not really harmonize the idea of God found in the Gospels with their philosophical description of God. On the one hand God was described as the philosophical Absolute, the ultimate reality of

<sup>1</sup>Hastings: *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol. III. Art. Calvinism, by Jas. Orr. p. 146.

the universe, all-sufficient. On the other hand, they thought of the God of the Bible, whose Fatherly heart is revealed in the Son who came to be the Friend and Savior of the world. The problem of harmonizing the God of philosophy and speculation and the God of the Bible was not met. The problem of finding God in the light of every day experience brings us into the next period, when the way has opened up for a return to the method of Jesus' approach to God.

## VI. THE TRANSITION STAGE.

### 1. *God as Immanent.*

In the nineteenth century the problem of God's transcendence began to be left in the background, and writers turned their attention to the idea of God as immanent. Kant endeavored to point out how people can experience God without knowing anything about Him. Our experience and convictions have in them something of the divine element. The real content of religion is in us; the idea of God belongs to the region of practical faith rather than of theoretical knowledge.

### 2. *The starting point is in experience.*

Following Kant, it has been usual to say that experience is the real source of our knowledge of God. Through this close contact of God with life, man's life is transformed, and enriched. God dwells in man. To be saved is to let this experience operate in man. Jesus realized this experience completely. It is this experience that should be the starting point, rather than theories of the transcendental character of God. Thus, instead of first believing and accepting by faith what is set down, and understanding whatever you can, the tendency has more recently been to question everything, and when you have something which stands the test of experience,

then to accept it. Ideas are subject to modification in the light of further experience. The bearing of evolution and historical criticism on our problem will be presented in the next chapter.

## VII. CONCLUSION.

### 1. *The Changing Emphasis.*

Throughout this study we have found that there is a sense in which the idea of God has been modified from period to period. As the Hebrews in need of help in war pictured God as a War God, and later when they obtained a larger view of the world, they thought of God as international, so throughout the years of Christian development, the idea of God has taken on the influence of the thinking of the times.

### 2. *The Permanent Elements.*

On the other hand, there are some permanent elements which we see running through this historical study. There is the search of man for God and also the feeling that God does come in contact with man. Sometimes the idea of God as a God of love seems to have been lost sight of, but not permanently. Also Jesus has been regarded as giving to man a special revelation of God, and through him salvation and the fellowship of the Kingdom of God is made possible.

But the emphasis has been largely on the matters of belief, ritual and mystical experience. The matter of character has not been overlooked, and indeed was, as E. F. Scott<sup>1</sup> points out, the constant factor throughout these changing years. Here the ideas of Jesus have remained authoritative but they have taken a place parallel to rather than coincident with the theological emphasis. But for Jesus there was no such sharp

<sup>1</sup>E. F. Scott: *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*. Macmillan. 1924. Introduction—p. ix f.

separation. "His ethics and his religion," says Dr. Scott<sup>1</sup> "are everywhere so intimately bound together that they cannot be separated . . . . his ethic has no meaning apart from his religion."

### 3. *The Present Problem.*

Where the interests are wholly theological, Jesus' idea of God cannot be completely grasped. And it has become the task of our day to unite these two phases of religion. We plan to make our contribution to this problem in the latter chapters of this study. Progress towards this goal is aided by certain developments of thought in recent years. These developments will occupy our attention in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup>E. F. Scott: *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*. Macmillan. 1924. Introduction—p. xii.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RECONSTRUCTING THE IDEA OF GOD

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

##### I Introduction.

1. The Christian God is a God of "experience".
2. The whole thought-outlook of man today has been modified; therefore restatement is necessary.

##### II The formal definitions of the past.

1. Creeds and Catechisms.

##### III Modern views which modify the idea of God.

1. God's contact with the world through Creation.
2. God's contact with the world through Revelation.
3. God's contact with the world through Miracle.

##### IV The Effect of a Christocentric Gospel.

1. Its point of emphasis.
2. Its effect on the problem of God's relations with man.
  - a. The justice of God.
  - b. The suffering of man.
  - c. The autocratic relationship untenable.
3. Its effect on man's contact with his fellows (the Social Gospel).

##### V The Problem for Religious Education.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RECONSTRUCTING THE IDEA OF GOD.

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

##### 1. *The Christian God is a God of "experience".*

Our attention in this chapter will be directed to certain conclusions reached in recent years which have necessitated a restatement of the idea of God and which brings religious thinking more in harmony with the teaching of Jesus. We have noticed in the last chapter that the content of the idea of God is related to current thinking. So each age must face anew what will make religion vital for the time. God should never become old-fashioned. The closer God is related to every day thinking and experience, the more vital is religion, and therefore the nearer to the ideal. It is not enough to read about God in the Gospels or in the Creeds. To be acquainted only with statements about God is to miss the real message of Jesus. It is to be acquainted with an external God, not with the real intimate Father. We must feel that He is a Father to us, that He is present in the world that we know, and that it is in the relationships of this world that He calls for our devotion. The Jew talked about the God of the past, and the God of the future. Jesus taught about the God of the present. So it is right to look for God in the passing experiences of our lives and of our time.

##### 2. *The whole thought-outlook of man today has been modified; therefore restatement is necessary.*

There has probably been no time in history when it has been more necessary to consider this fact than today. The changes

that have taken place in social living, the new points of view that are now received as a result of the scientific and historic research of the past generation have changed the whole manner of living and of thinking. It would be difficult to find any idea which has not undergone modification. The unquestioning acceptance of religious statements of other times, where the thoughts, the activities, the social demands were different keeps religion from being vital. It is necessary for each age to consider the essential points of faith and relate them to the thought and conduct of the time. Man is to be guided by the Spirit, and not to be in bondage to the letter. The highest ideals of faith, of thought and of conduct must be brought into unity. What we are attempting in this thesis must also be attempted by each individual—the consideration of one's attitude to God, one's thinking about God and the conduct God expects. To live in close contact with the changes in life and thought through which the world has been passing and not to feel any change in one's idea of God is to miss a vital experience of God.

## II. THE FORMAL DEFINITIONS OF THE PAST.

### 1. *Creeds and Catechisms.*

To begin with, we are faced with the matter of Creeds and Catechisms. One of the marvels of Christianity is the way it has adapted itself to meet varying situations. We have already noticed this in connection with the Nicene problem. We honor those who have solved the problems of their day with such clear insight. Their work marked stages of progress. But it also led to making religion formal and external. To know what God was like, one must study these statements. The sanction they received from the church, the frequency of their use, the support they received from scholars, together with the

absence of radical change in thought, made them persist. But today we feel that it was impossible for the church of the fourth century to present an idea of God which was not definitely related to the world view of the time. The political and ethical background and the religious experience suggest a world situation different from our own. To expect that such a formal statement would permanently satisfy the Christian experience is to go against the spirit of Christianity. Neither the authority of councils, nor of saints, nor traditional associations can make it vital for all time. The same is true of the Catechisms.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of the modern world calls for investigation and criticism in every field. It regards as authoritative for itself the conclusions arrived at through present day investigations and experience. The results of scientific findings of today have opened up to us a new world of nature and of thought. As a result, the views that have been held as to the contact God has with the world and with man have undergone a change.

### III. MODERN VIEWS WHICH MODIFY THE IDEA OF GOD.

#### 1. *God's Contact with the World through Creation.*

We shall now see some ways in which the scientific findings of recent years have opened the way to the thought of God as intimate with man. In regard to the creation of the world the idea of the past was that the world as made at the beginning was completely formed and furnished with plants and animals and human beings. Evolution suggests to the modern world a different theory of creation and therefore a different view of the way God works in the world. God was

<sup>1</sup>The Westminster definition of God would be more complete, it is sometimes felt, if the idea of *love* were more prominently expressed. See Bruce: *Psychology of Christian Life and Behavior*. T. & T. Clark. 1923. p. 205.

thought of as removed from the world but with power to interfere at any time. He was regarded as free to withdraw his contact with the world if he so wished and allow it to be destroyed. He was thought of both as Almighty and Capricious. The idea of God as working in the world through fixed laws had not yet been conceived. The heavens that declared His glory were not far away and the great systems in the heavens which the modern telescope discovers were still unrealized. The earth was the center of the universe, and all things were created for man's use. It was easy then to speak of God as Almighty and of the unusual happenings as the result of His direct intervention. But today, with our knowledge of evolution, of personality, and of the social interactions of peoples, the power of God seems in a sense to have its limitations. We now think of God as working in and through these media. We shall refer later in this chapter to the idea of a limited God. God in the past could easily be thought of as withholding rain or as sending disaster as a direct punishment for sin. We still see sudden changes in nature; we still see that there is a very positive meaning in this saying, "A fruitful land maketh He barren for the iniquity of them that dwell therein," but the methods by which these changes are brought about are given a different explanation. The power of God is still thought of as infinite but it is the power which belongs to love. Wherever you find love and good will in action, there you find God as Creator.

## *2. God's contact with the world through Revelation.*

How does man know God and the will of God? It has been held that God speaks to man in and through the Bible. The Book is inspired. If you wish to know the mind of God on any subject, you will look within its pages. No ideas outside the Bible have divine authority, but everything within the Bible

is equally binding. In opposition to this the modern student holds that the real inspiration is not found in the book but in the writers. And because it is mere human beings who are inspired, therefore there are human elements in the Bible. What is regarded as having divine sanction and authority has to be discovered and selected in relation to the life and teachings of Jesus. When we say that we believe the Bible to be the rule for our direction, we mean not that there is a command from God to be followed in every part, but that there are underlying principles in the Bible, of thought, conduct and aspiration, which must be followed if man is to be at his best. The Bible, like the Creeds, is tinged with historical problems which lend color to its views. One has to distinguish between the elements which have only a historical interest and the elements which have permanent spiritual worth. Modern criticism has a definite answer to the statement that to know God and to learn His will you must go to the Bible. It replies in brief: which idea of God will you take? The idea of God which was held by Moses, or by the Chronicler, may have seemed adequate to them but did not satisfy the prophets, and later Jesus had to make further corrections. The knowledge of God and of His will is always limited by the needs of the time. The disciples could not bear all that Jesus had to reveal. So the Bible has a forward look. The Old Testament looks forward to the time when God would be revealed more fully. The New Testament does not declare that no experience of God could be had in later years. It rather opens the way for fuller revelations and richer experiences.

To say that we are to believe merely in the "revelation" of the past does not satisfy us. We would point also to nature about us as we know it, to the events of history as they have been seen in our time, to the inner consciousness which is never freed from the task of deciding matters, and we would declare

that the persons who can see God in these ways, and can interpret God to their fellows through these ways, have messages from God for the time. Thus the notion of authority has changed. The real guide is not what an external source imposes on the individual. One must ask: Is this true? Is it necessary? Is it timely? The findings of science are a real aid to the understanding of God, and as far as they show greater understanding of the world and of man's relationships in the world than had previously been held, then their conclusions are more binding than the views and decisions of other days. And so the God whose wonders we see in nature today, whose hand we see in history, whose will we see in the social and religious ideals of our time, is revealing Himself in a larger and fuller way than in past ages. To overlook the authority of this present outlook is to miss His leading for our time. For Jesus, it was a mark of merit to discern the signs of the times (Mt. 16: 3). To think of God as revealing Himself through modern prophets and modern scientists is again to bring God into the relationship of intimacy with mankind.

### 3. *God's contact with the world through Miracle.*

God's contact with the world has often been pictured as being evidenced only in the unusual, the spectacular; the events which are different from the usual and the normal. So it has often been easy in the past to believe in miracle, and in exceptional answers to prayer. Many of the events formerly thought of as unusual and "unnatural" have with further knowledge come to be understood by us as belonging to the usual order of nature; for example, earthquakes, eclipses, epidemics. Also, in regard to the healing miracles, there is a similarity between some of them and the methods and results of modern medical science. It does not do, then, to place all



"miracles," as they were formerly regarded, outside of the natural and therefore in the divine realm. We have fallen heir to a view which has placed a gulf between the natural and the divine. We now go so far as to think of the natural as divine. When it is discovered that happenings which had been called "miracle" are in accordance with regular laws of nature, then God is brought nearer, and His relation with the world is regarded as more uniform and intimate. A full discussion of miracles is not required here, but it is necessary to state that where there is a similarity between Biblical miracles and modern experience, that similarity should be recognized. The spiritual still clings to these events because they are regarded as the results of the will of God. However, the view that God's contact with the world must be irregular has been the source of much confusion, and through our better understanding of law in the physical and spiritual world, we see that God works through law.

#### IV. THE EFFECT OF A CHRISTOCENTRIC GOSPEL.

##### 1. *Its point of emphasis.*

The recent tendency to focus all theological studies about the life and teaching of Jesus has not been without its effect on the idea of God. The study of Jesus' attitude to God, his teaching about God, and the response he expected from his followers as a result of that teaching, has given the present generation a new point of approach. God in the past was to be accepted through argument rather than through experience. Recently it has been felt (as stated in the previous chapter) that the God of Jesus as a God who is known in the experiences of life has been neglected. With Jesus, God was a Father who was to be lived with, to be loved and to be followed. This contact was to give a direction, a purpose to the whole of life.

2. *Its effect on the problem of God's relations with man.*

a. *The Justice of God.*

In consideration of the fact that the God of Jesus is a God of love and goodness, certain questions have arisen in the modern mind as to the value of conclusions that have been commonly accepted as to God's contact with man. Because of God's absolute Sovereignty, it was held that He could act in an arbitrary manner; that He had no permanent standards. He could thus act, if He so desired, in a manner that would not be regarded as just and honorable according to human standards. The question of the punishment of all men as a result of Adam's sin, the death of Jesus as an expiation for the sins of all, the doctrine of election in its crude form, making God choose from all eternity some for everlasting bliss and consign others to eternal punishment, these and other questions involving the goodness and love of God have naturally had to be reconsidered. If God is love and goodness and justice and truth, as the Gospels declare, then it is these qualities that we must expect in Him in His contact with man. It is the God of Jesus, the God who is like Jesus, that we must interpret to the world.

b. *The Suffering of Man.*

There is again the question of the attitude of God to the suffering of the world. Why did God not stop the war? Why did God send this particular calamity? Does modern thought give any satisfying answer to these pathetic "whys"? What is the nature of God when such suffering is permitted? H. G. Wells gives his answer in a much quoted passage. Though not a theologian, his statements are widely quoted in theological writings. In *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, he writes: "God is not absolute; God is finite; a finite God who struggles

in his great and comprehensive way, as we struggle in our weak and silly way—who is with us—that is the essence of all religion.” We cannot accept this if it means that God is growing in wisdom, or righteousness, or love with the passing years, but we do feel that Mr. Wells has grasped the idea of the intimacy of God with man; and of the interest God has in man, in leading him to higher levels. His idea would be more acceptable if he spoke of God not as finite but as limited because of the freedom allowed to man. Though this freedom may bring man suffering, yet, on the other hand, it has a positive value, which will be brought out in a later chapter. But man is not the only one who suffers, for have we not the story of the Prodigal Son, or rather, as it might be called, the story of the Loving Father? Because God is Love, He must suffer because of man’s wrongdoing. God’s interest is not in exacting penalties but in having the trust and co-operation of man. Where man’s suffering is not the result of sin, he has God’s fullest sympathy, as we may judge from the attitude of Jesus, and such suffering may be used for the strengthening of character. Once more God’s intimacy is brought out, since He is companionable and sympathetic. “If God is a mere spectator of it all, God must be something less than perfect Love,” writes Streeter.<sup>1</sup>

*c. The autocratic relationship untenable.*

If God then is with man in his struggles, He is removed from the realm of autocracy. “Friend” was the word which appealed to Jesus in regard to his followers, and is not in keeping with the autocratic relationship. “No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you” (Jn. 15: 15). One

<sup>1</sup>Streeter: Concerning Prayer. Macmillan. 1916. p. 36.

may infer that where the will of God is known, the relationship of friendship is established between God and man. Thus those who know and do the will of God enter into a relationship of friendship with Him.

3. *Its effect on man's contact with his fellows (the Social Gospel).*

God is a God of Love, and He can be known only through love. This love must be expressed not only to God but to one another. Jesus links together love to God and to one's neighbor. He calls for love in action. Love must have a direction, an object. Like all the Christian qualities, there must be contacts, relationships. This opens the way for the Social Gospel. It is only in living the life of sympathy and service and love that one can know God.

In making Jesus' idea of God central, we see, therefore, that many old conceptions must be abandoned. God cannot at the same time be unjust and just, be unsympathetic to man's suffering and be a loving Father, be aloof and intimate. Therefore, we must accept Jesus' view with all it implies.

V. THE PROBLEM FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

There will always be confusion for the young where religion and the problems of the time are not inter-related. The language of religion must not be removed from the language of everyday life and thought. The ideas of the school must be given a religious interpretation. The modern pupil in our schools will not accept and should not be expected to accept an idea of God which cannot be applied to his historical, scientific and literary studies. Knowledge gained in the school reveals God and His ways to the pupil. This knowledge again must be given a religious application. We know that it

is a religious problem to know how to use modern explosives. Religion and education are closely interlocked, so it is not true to say that the pupil gets all his religious education on Sunday. Therefore, it is all the more necessary that the church and school be on intimate terms; that they recognize that they are aiding and supplementing each other. Only in this way can God be made real. Definitions and formal statements should not be taught as containing the whole truth about God, when it is known that experience has its own contribution to make and has new problems to face. The method of Jesus is so much in keeping with the scientific method of today, where free inquiry and independent investigation are allowed and conclusions which have a definite, vital bearing are sought for, that it is only reasonable to insist that it is the God of Jesus who should be known by the growing boys and girls of our day, rather than any partial interpretation or misinterpretation of God. To lead the pupils to experience that feeling of intimacy with God that Jesus had, to show them that God is a helper and guide in life, and that to co-operate with God in a life of active good will is the only way to attain to fullness of life, is the task of religious education.

Our next chapter will deal with the problem of intimacy with God as experienced in worship.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTIMACY WITH GOD AS EXPERIENCED IN WORSHIP

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

##### I Introduction.

1. The reality of worship.
2. The worship experience of Jesus and his followers.

##### II The Bearing of Worship on Present Needs.

##### III Aids in Worship.

1. The relation of definite knowledge about God to worship.
2. The value of common worship.
3. Atmosphere in worship.
4. Adaptation in worship.

Note: What Sunday School pupils think about worship.

##### IV Materials of Worship.

1. Music.
2. Prayer.
3. Devotional reading.
4. The story.

##### V Conclusion.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTIMACY WITH GOD AS EXPERIENCED IN WORSHIP

#### 1. INTRODUCTION.

##### 1. *The reality of worship.*

The orientation of one's nature to God is what is usually thought of in worship. We have seen how Jesus' idea of God led him to seek God's fellowship, both alone and in company with others, to seek help from Him, and to allow his whole nature to be directed by what he felt to be the Father's will. Can we make God as real in our lives, so real that His fellowship will be sought in public and in private, and that there will be the same dominating desire to do His will? How can the whole of life be brought into relation with the divine? This chapter will deal with that aspect of the relationship to God which we think of as worship. In later chapters we will deal with intellectual problems and problems related to conduct; for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is" (Heb. 11: 6), so there is an intellectual content in man's approach to God, and this fellowship is not complete until there is a definite desire to direct all one's activities to the highest ends.

##### 2. *The worship experience of Jesus and his followers.*

The question may be asked: Why did Jesus worship? In the first place, worship was a part of his early training. As we would say, "he was brought up to it." He lived in a pious home and was associated with those who frequented places of

worship. In the second place, he had such intimate experience of the Father's fellowship that he found himself naturally drawn to God. No one could have an experience of God such as Jesus had without being drawn to Him in reverence and loyalty. In the third place, he found that life's highest joys come from acting in harmony with God's will, and thus he sought to know God's will. In the fourth place, Jesus found that there was something to be gained from God: that definite requests were to be made to Him. Jesus prayed because he felt the need of prayer. In this way he kept in touch with the Father.

"O Thou, by whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way!  
The path of prayer thyself hast trod.  
Lord, teach us how to pray!"

*(James Montgomery)*

These experiences which came from Jesus' fellowship with God were to be shared by his followers. They, too, were to pray. As an aid, he gave what we know as the Lord's prayer. It was to serve not so much as a model prayer to be repeated by rote, but as an example of the way of approach to God. Such a prayer reveals the fact that Jesus expected man to approach God in reverence and yet in confidence, to pray for the great ends that God Himself seeks, and to ask for things which bring personal comfort and happiness. Thus man is to have those feelings of affection towards God and confidence in His will, loyalty to His cause, and expectation of good things from Him which marked the earthly life of Jesus.

## II. THE BEARING OF WORSHIP ON PRESENT NEEDS.

Worship is thus to be real and helpful for present needs. Where God's contact with the world and with life is not

thought of as intimate and regular, worship does not put central present needs. It may consider its purpose fulfilled by directing the thoughts of the worshipper to the past or the future. Many hymns even recently used have had their main emphasis on life after death. The bad effect of this unnatural sentiment for childhood is very evident. Nor do we think of prayer as a necessity to ward off disaster which God may send to us at any time in punishment or wrath. Today, since we live in a world which science has made safer and more fascinating, we find man's attention turned more to present problems. So in religion we see a return to the idea that worship has a value for present needs. A study of Jesus' life and teaching has shown that this is what should be expected in religion, and the experience of Christian people shows that it is realized.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosom take;  
What parched ground refresh, as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all the distant and the near  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear!  
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!  
*(Archbishop Trench)*

Dr. Pratt<sup>1</sup> tells us that "Christian prayers and hymns tended from the first to contain a broader and more free expression of human personality in close and intimate intercourse with the Divine." This has been particularly true since the Reformation, when the barriers which separated the believer from his God were thrown aside, and emphasis was laid, not on deeds of merit, but on salvation by faith. Instead of thinking of

<sup>1</sup>Pratt: Art. Worship. Standard Bible Dictionary.

worship as a service rendered to God, the idea of fellowship of children with a father began to stand out more prominently. In keeping with this view, the idea of participation in worship by the whole congregation became more firmly established. Lutheranism turned to congregational singing of hymns written in the vernacular, and Calvinism secured popular participation in worship through the use of the Psalter. The tendency in Protestantism has been more or less constant to do away with fixed forms in worship but to encourage the free approach of the individual to God.<sup>1</sup> Paul's advice was "Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks."<sup>2</sup> The Christian spirit can best find itself in worship apart from set forms of expression which have no direct bearing on present needs. Jesus opposed "vain repetitions" (Mt. 6: 5ff) and as we have already noted, gave the Lord's Prayer as an example of the right sort of prayer rather than as a set form the repetition of which would have some magical value.

### III. AIDS IN WORSHIP.

#### 1. *The relation of definite knowledge about God to worship.*

Definite knowledge of God is not only a help but a necessity in true worship. Early the child should be trained in right thinking about God. The first year's lessons in the graded courses used in the Church Schools are prepared for this purpose. The child's early dependence on human fatherhood is a supreme aid in understanding the nature of Divine Fatherhood. The affection and devotion which young boys and girls show to parents and leaders are an aid in understanding the attitude which should be expressed to the God of love who is

<sup>1</sup>Adolf Deissman tells us that the few prayers of Jesus outbalance all the literary prayers produced during two thousand years of Christian history. *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*. Doran. 1923.

<sup>2</sup>1 Thess. 5: 17, 18a.

revealed in Jesus. Youth, in facing the great decisions of life which are to be a guide to its endeavors in later years, is greatly aided through the knowledge that there is divine help for the life that is lived in harmony with the will of God, and that opposition to the will of God brings its punishments. Worship is aided through such knowledge of God as will bring assurance that God is a God of love, is Spirit and is always near, is a Helper in the problems of life, and is worthy of our love and devotion. Prayer should not be addressed to an unknown God. Our growing people should early become familiar with the lines along which help and leading may be expected from God. They should know whom they worship.

## 2. *The value of common worship.*

It is significant that the first word in the Lord's Prayer is "our." It immediately unites the one who prays with his fellows. When we look to God, we at the same time look to man. Worship cannot rightly be wholly solitary and individualistic. The social content of prayers and hymns is an important element in true worship. It is unfortunate that there are not more hymns available of the type of Washington Gladden's "O Master, let me walk with thee," and North's "Where cross the crowded ways of life." The social content of worship is strengthened when people worship together. We are told that it is easier to be hypnotized if other hypnotized people are in the same room. So with worship, it is easier to worship when others are worshipping. When there is a company of people together, holding a common faith in a God of goodness and love, and a common hope and expectation that His way is best, and will prevail, and can be furthered through their united efforts, then it is easy to unite in singing together or reading together the words of others who have been guided by a similar faith and to pray about matters in which all have a common

interest. The psychology of the crowd has something to say about common worship. Dr. Bruce<sup>1</sup> writes: "When one enters an assembly thoroughly united in one purpose and living in prayer before God, the concentration of many thoughts, many desires and many wills upon one object is a spiritual force of the most powerful kind." This atmosphere of faith and expectation opens the heart to the influence of the Holy Spirit. The emotional value of common worship is increased when the worshippers take an active part in the service. The term "audience" should not be a fitting word to use in reference to a Christian congregation of worshippers.

### 3. *Atmosphere in worship.*

Children worship because their elders worship, and as their elders worship. They are in the first place imitators in manner and in spirit. This does not mean that the spirit of worship can not be very real to the young. It means rather that the feeling for worship is brought to expression through imitation. External influences must be watched. Although worship is a matter of spirit, the type of meeting place, pictures, the worshipful attitude on the part of teachers and leader, all are an aid in securing and maintaining a spirit of worship. Yet worship must not be thought to depend on such outside, artificial influences. It should be recognized that it is a response to a natural need in man. The study of the worship elements must be kept separate from the use of these elements in worship. The learning process and the use of the same material in worship represent two quite different moods. There should be a time set aside for the learning of new hymns, Psalms, and other passages for responsive and collective reading, and also prayers, but in the worship period the service should proceed with spontaneity.

<sup>1</sup>W. S. Bruce: *The Psychology of Christian Life and Behavior*. T. & T. Clark. 1923. p. 168.

Worship becomes more meaningful through practice and expression. The infant has a desire to speak and chatters away in an unintelligible jargon, but through his later training in expressing his thoughts, speech becomes more intelligible to him as well as to his auditors. So the feelings and emotions of worship take on added meaning through training and expression. The attention, the activities and the repose necessary for worship should be definitely planned for. Interruptions should be guarded against, whether from disturbances among the group, or lack of preparation of the leader, or from a program built on unscientific principles.

#### 4. *Adaptation in worship.*

We are thinking here chiefly of worship as it must be carried on in the Church School, on Sunday and during the week. That the worship may be natural, the leader must see that the theme of worship is suited to the group. A close study of psychology is necessary as well as a study of the individual problems of the pupils, in order that real and actual needs and aspirations be before the minds of the pupils in their worship. Graded worship should as far as possible be provided. This can be done where the departments meet separately. The feelings of thankfulness, good will, faith, loyalty, can be aroused through definite concrete themes. A single theme should be presented for each service. The numerous special days of the Sunday School year lend themselves to such a system. Also they suggest what might be planned for other occasions; for example, the whole of November can very well be used to emphasize various phases of the idea of thanksgiving. December can be set aside for such a theme as good will. It is not too much to expect the leader to plan the programs many weeks and months in advance. The service should be sufficiently brief to hold the attention throughout, and sufficiently

definite and personal to secure a ready response from the group of worshippers. Appropriate responses by the choir or by the whole group add to the effectiveness of the service as they provide for the needed co-operation. The planning of the service of worship should often be left to the classes. A class delights to work out a service of worship centering around some theme suggested by the lesson course, and to lead the whole department in the worship service which has thus been prepared.<sup>1</sup> The service should frequently be led by the pupils themselves.

In accomplishing the task of making God intelligible and worship real, the Sunday School can make a great contribution. In training the pupils to direct their thoughts towards ideal attitudes and purposes, a definite and lasting "set" is given to their lives. The songs may be outgrown, the verses used may be forgotten, but the habit of communion with God has been formed and will be preserved. This purpose is best accomplished by realizing that even children can worship in spirit and in truth; that they have religious feelings to be

<sup>1</sup>This prayer was prepared thus co-operatively by a third year intermediate girls' class and given in connection with a service of worship which a class led:

"Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Thy loving care over us during the past week. We thank Thee for sleep and for fresh strength each morning. We thank Thee for our homes and for those who are dear to us. Bless us today, we pray. Bless all those whom we love. Keep them from harm and guard them in all their ways. Bless the suffering people of this and other lands, and put it into our hearts to share what we have with them. Help us to be more unselfish toward our neighbors and to learn to love those whom we thought we could not love. Forgive all our sins, we pray. Help us to follow the example of Jesus in our tasks, in our pleasures, in service, and in our choice of friends. Let Thy light so shine through the members of this Sunday School that we may be called 'Bearers of the Light.' For Jesus' sake. Amen."



stimulated, and longings to be fed and satisfied, and that for their genuine participation, the worship must be adapted to their needs. Unless the attitudes of confidence, hope and desire for service are thereby developed, the opposite attitudes of fear and doubt and self-interest are apt to control the outlook of the person throughout life.

Note: What Sunday School pupils think about worship.

The writer, wishing to know what meaning the pupils in his Sunday School got out of their worship, asked them to write down briefly what worship meant to them. Here are some of the replies received.

*Senior Department:*

Worship is a good way to give vent to your overflow of Christian joy.

Worship is a comfort in times of grief and sorrow.

Worship means service.

Worship is a help to make one strong in resisting temptation.

Worship means to serve, love and obey God.

Thanksgiving.

To better our lives by learning about God.

We worship in order to receive help from our Father.

Communion.

We worship in order to communicate with God.

Worship brings us closer to God.

We worship in order to be forgiven.

*Intermediate Department:*

We ask for God's help in prayer.

We learn not to be selfish.

We learn about Christ and follow his example.  
We worship God to keep us from temptations.  
Keeps our hearts and minds free from evil.  
We worship God because we have faith in Him.  
Thankfulness.  
Thanking God for His gifts to us.  
Praising God.  
Singing.  
Worship is prayer and the praise of God.  
To set an example for others to follow.  
The strength gained by communion with God.  
Because we love God.

*Junior Department:*

Prayer.  
Give thanks to God.  
Singing songs of praise.  
Praise God.  
Giving money to the poor.  
Think about God.  
Be still in church and listen.  
To think about God and Jesus.  
To mind God and whatever God says.  
To be quiet.  
To be good.  
To obey your parents and Jesus.  
To work for people.  
Worship is to pray.  
Feel a love for God.  
Worship means to think of the words of Jesus.  
Think of the things Jesus has given to us.  
Thank Jesus for all the good things.  
Try to be like Jesus.

Pray to God.

Praise God and thank Him for His gifts.

Thank Him for His kindness.

In these answers one notices that the Junior pupils think largely of the separate acts of worship, while with the older pupils the meaning of these acts is fairly clear. Miss Danielson, in the *Elementary Teacher*, October, 1923, writes thus of children's prayers: "What prayer is and what it accomplishes, they do not question. They do not argue about prayer; with sincerity and perfect faith, they practice it." The answers given above show that with the Intermediates, and more particularly with the Seniors, what worship can accomplish stands out more clearly than in earlier years.

#### IV. MATERIALS OF WORSHIP.

Of the materials of worship, we know that Jesus used prayer, the devotional reading of the Scriptures, singing. He praised those who devoted their substance to God's work; he recognized Baptism; and he desired to be remembered in the common meal. The Sacraments according to our practice belong chiefly to the Church assemblies, yet the service of Baptism may very well have a place at such Church School services as are held on Christmas and Easter, Children's Day and Mother's Day. But the elements of worship usually thought of in connection with a Sunday School service of worship are: hymns and music, selections from the Bible and elsewhere for reading, a story, a prayer, and the offering. Definite and purposeful orders of worship must be planned.

The phase of worship known as meditation is usually thought of as personal and private. In public worship there is an element of meditation in all the separate acts. But definite times for meditation exclusively are not planned for. Perhaps more attention should be given to this phase of worship since,

in the rush of modern life, it is easy to forget that there is a God. But the danger of meditation developing into mysticism is apparent.

### 1. *Music.*

The value of good music cannot be overestimated. A selection played by one pianist can create an atmosphere of silence and reverence, and when rendered by another person causes stir and bustle. It too often happens that the Church Schools have to fall back on people who have more feeling for the light, airy music of the dance than the music of devotion. The service may well open with some selection of music without words. Where conditions are suitable, a processional may be used. A definite theme should be set for the whole program of worship, and the hymns should have a direct bearing on the theme chosen. The singing is helped when the words have been memorized and the music is familiar and within the range of the pupils' voices. It should be expected that the hymns would aid in furthering the devotional tone of the service rather than be used to make a noise. Where the leader insists on singing "that-stanza-over-again-to-raise-the-roof," the devotional effect of the hymn is lost and the thought of the hymn neglected. Sometimes the words of the hymn are familiar but the meaning is not understood. It is a help here to have classes choose the hymns which are to be used. The leader should ask for the reason for the choices. Some hymns have a strong appeal to girls, while others appeal to boys. Both can make their contribution to the worship program where they are each given opportunity to choose the hymns to be used.

It is in keeping with the need of the times that all modern hymn books set apart a section for hymns on brotherhood and service. But there are still too few hymns which express the

responsibility that man should take in making the world brotherly. Especially in the teen age when the pupils are beginning to plan for their life work, it is valuable to have the ideal of service enter into their devotions.

## 2. *Prayer.*

Prayers should be marked by reverence, brevity and simplicity. Thus only can they be in keeping with the teaching and example of Jesus. Many prayers lose their value because the language is cumbersome and antiquated. The thought should be positive, suggesting confidence and hopefulness. Harm may be done through emphasizing other-worldliness and death. In prayer, the minds of the children should be directed towards God and His kingdom. They should be led to consider in their prayer life the goodness and love of God, the example of Jesus, the main tasks of the church, the welfare of their friends, and of all people, the qualities of truthfulness, obedience, loyalty, unselfishness. Care should be taken that the prayers are not self-centred. In prayer, as with Jesus so with us, the self retires. Prayer should be an expression of the desire to identify one's will with the will of God and to devote one's time and energy according to the leading of His spirit. The Father knows man's need, but He welcomes the childlike attitude of continuous trust (Lk. 18: 1). It is not enough to ask God to do things. Our request should be to know how to express in our lives His will.

Forms of prayer have a place. The classes and the department may appropriately have prayers the words of which are familiar to all. The infant has a capacity for speech but has to be taught to express his thoughts; so with prayer, most people would ask the question of the disciples, "Teach us to pray." Where set prayers are used, they should be changed from time to time. Jesus did not expect that people would

pray to him. Prayers addressed to Jesus and the Holy Spirit only create confusion in the mind of the young. God is never thought of as being less than Jesus, so there is nothing lost but much is gained by addressing all prayers to God the Father. It would not be out of place if the "Amen" were spoken not by the leader but by the group. It would suggest that the prayer is made not by the leader to the group or by the leader alone to God but that the prayer is the prayer of all. A prayer response by the choir or the whole audience has the same purpose.

### 3. *Devotional reading.*

Much of what has already been said about the selection of hymns and the type of prayer to be used applies also to the passages used for devotional reading. Carefully selected passages from the Bible will be memorized and frequently used. These selections will include brief calls to worship and longer passages appropriate for responsive or collective reading. The Bible will be the most fruitful source because its central theme is how men and God have found each other. Devotional selections can also be found in extra-Biblical sources, in the writings of great leaders of religion, and even of men who have had to guide the political destinies of people, and have seen the hand of God in the events of history and have felt the need of dependence on Him in their private and public undertakings. Passages can be found, too, which point to the spiritual in nature. The selections for reading, like the hymns, should often be chosen by the classes. Care should be taken that the passage used, from whatever source, is in keeping with the Christian view of God and with Christian ideals.

### 4. *The story.*

Stories are coming more and more to find a place in the service of worship. In speaking of the value of the story and

the informal talk as a part of the worship, Marie Cole Powell<sup>1</sup> says: "A word should be said of the relative value of the story and the talk in a service of worship for Junior children. There is no form so powerful as the story to make ideas vivid or truth appealing to children of this age. Many children's sermons fail because they are too 'preachy.' They point out their moral too plainly. The story grips life because it is a reproduction of life itself. But there is a place, now and then, for the informal talk by the leader or for the interchange of ideas between leader and children. If some ethical problem is to be cleared up by the service of worship, or if an idea quite new in content is to be developed, it can often be done by the informal talk or conversation and the spirit of real worship maintained at the same time." The type of talk suggested is such as may be found in Hartshorne's *Manual for Training in Worship*. The same writer also suggests that the dramatization of a story by the children will sometimes fit in to a worship program. Care should be taken that a break does not occur in the service through the arranging of scenery or preparing of costumes or the lack of preparation of those who are to take part.

## V. CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, worship is the personal approach of the soul to God. In worship the reality of God stands out in its clearness, and the whole of life is unified and directed into a definite mould of consecration and purpose. The feelings are stirred and focused on ideal qualities, character is stabilized, and the individual is led to see more clearly the path of duty. The Church School offers an unusual opportunity to foster the growth of the experience of worship. In assuming its responsibility, it should aim to adapt its service to meet the

<sup>1</sup>Marie Cole Powell: *Junior Method in the Church School*. Abingdon Press. 1923. p. 186.

real needs of the pupil, to develop helpful attitudes, and to call out the best thought and expression of the pupil. In this way, the pupil learns to bring his needs to God, and to feel and accept the common task of Christian brotherhood.



## CHAPTER SIX

### TEACHING THE IDEA OF GOD

#### THE CONTENT OF THE TEACHING

##### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

##### I Introduction.

1. The Importance of Right Views.

##### II The Nature of God.

##### III The Place of Jesus in the Idea of God.

##### IV Problems of Experience.

1. The Character of the God-Conscious Man--  
The Holy Spirit.
2. What is Sin? Conversion?
3. What is Salvation?
4. The Place of Freedom and Conscience.

##### V God in the World.

##### VI What Children Think of God.



## CHAPTER SIX

### TEACHING THE IDEA OF GOD

#### THE CONTENT OF THE TEACHING

##### I. INTRODUCTION.

We shall next consider the problem of how Jesus' idea of God can be realized through the process of teaching. We shall consider in this chapter some of the problems relating to the content of the teaching with which the teacher is constantly faced.

##### 1. *The Importance of Right Views.*

An elderly lady with a grown up family told the writer a few years ago that she never had anything to do with God since she was a small girl. She had asked God, she said, for something when she was a child, which God ought to have given her, and God refused. So ever after she shut God out of her life. More recently a boys' club made up of boys of fifteen and sixteen years of age, meeting on a week night, wished to lay aside the regular program for two meetings in order that such questions as the following might be discussed: "Where was God before the world was made?" "What is the relation of God to the planets and other heavenly bodies?" "What control has God over the life of people?" One of their questions was this: "If we can dig up the records of King Tut, why can't we dig up records of God?" The teacher is frequently called upon to face just such situations as these. There is probably no service that the teacher can render that

will be of more permanent worth than leading the pupil to distinguish between lower and higher conceptions of God, and to be guided by the higher. It is often noted that the general character not only of people but of nations reflects the idea of God which predominates. The teacher ought to realize that the attitude of Jesus to men and to life was the result of his thoughts of God.

In order to clear up difficulties and obscurities, the teacher must be able to relate Jesus' idea of God to the questions of sin and punishment, of salvation and the future life, the place of freedom and of conscience, the control of God in nature and in history. If pupils are not asking questions along these lines, it is often because they think the teacher has no information to give. The teacher's lack of knowledge on these points is often glossed over with the remark that "with God all things are possible."

## II. THE NATURE OF GOD.

God as Father whose nature is that of love must be the center of all teaching about God—One Who longs for the fellowship of all, even going out in search of those who would cast Him off, and Who calls for man's co-operation. Thoughts of the majesty and dignity of God must not take the place of thinking of God in terms of intimacy. Man ought to think of God as One Who thinks, feels and wills. He ought to realize the nature of the power of God—the power that belongs to the qualities of goodness and of love.<sup>1</sup> Such ideas of God as represent Him as intimate with mankind only in

<sup>1</sup> " . . the omnipotence of God will mean neither the tawdry trappings of regal pomp, nor the irresistible might of a physical force. The divine omnipotence consists in the all compelling power of goodness and love to enlighten the grossest darkness, and to melt the hardest heart." (Pringle-Pattison: *The Idea of God*. Oxford University Press. 1917. p. 411).

the distant past, and as renewing that intimacy only in the future are foreign to Jesus' idea of God. The meaning of the phrase "God is Spirit" is frequently overlooked in man's thought of God. The child should be taught that the Kingdom of God is related to real normal healthy living and should be manifest in play, in social life, in home life and in business. The teacher will have to be on the alert to correct such views as suggest that God is an angry tyrant, continually threatening with direct, immediate punishment all who neglect certain religious tasks. The phrase "that is a judgment on him" is often misapplied.

### III. THE PLACE OF JESUS IN THE IDEA OF GOD.

The teacher will find continuous inspiration in a study of the life and messages of Jesus. Jesus is the "incarnation of God." Instead of looking for God in a particular locality, as in a temple, or a certain sacred spot, or in an exceptional phenomenon of nature, turn to Jesus. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."<sup>1</sup> You cannot hear or see or touch God but by seeing Jesus you can know what God is like. There is more to know about God than we can learn in Jesus, but we cannot get a truer knowledge of God's love and righteousness and power than is found in Jesus. The atonement is made intelligible in no clearer fashion than through making God thus vivid and personal. Knowing that God is like Jesus, that the spirit which dwelt in Jesus can dwell in man, that God's kingdom grows through the manifestation in man of the qualities found in Jesus, this makes God's will for man clear and definite. Man can attain to unity with God through the living of such an active religious life as Jesus lived. The fact that Jesus went all the way in faith and devotion to God, and that man's attempts are often spasmodic and meagre, should

<sup>1</sup>Jn. 14: 9b.

not deter him from taking Jesus as his guide in making the same spiritual adventure. Had more of his professed followers been willing to do so in the past, the world would have been saved many heart-breaking experiences.

Jesus' death is often spoken of as a means by which man is reconciled to God, Jesus thus "paying the price of sin." Such a magical conception of reconciliation misses much of the meaning of Jesus' life. Man is reconciled to God only by identifying his will with God. Jesus was faithful unto death. His death resulted from the conflict between his high standards and the low standards of the authorities of his time, but Jesus did not stop short of any suffering but showed rather to what length love—such love as God Himself has—is willing to go, in saving mankind. If this is what love will do, then let us love, for love is of God.<sup>1</sup> One cannot think that the theory of atonement is explained by saying that Jesus did something, by believing in which a man can be saved. Jesus does reconcile man to God but not in such a mechanical way.

The teacher must avoid two extremes; the one which removes Jesus so far from human interests as to make his messages of no real worth; and the other which makes him a popular hero, an outstanding man for his time, but really behind the times for our advanced age. Jesus' unique and permanent contribution to religion must ever be borne in mind, that in him and through him God is revealed, and that God is a God of continuous presence and helpfulness for all time and for all experiences.

The teacher must be able to discern that there are other ideas of God which are not in keeping with Jesus' teaching, which may in one way or another reach the mind of the pupil. So he must be on his guard. All the stories of God's dealing with the Hebrews as contained in the Old Testament do not

<sup>1</sup>cf. I Jn. 4: 7.

harmonize with the view of God which Jesus reveals. God is there represented as giving commands and revelations which could not be given by the God whom Jesus knew and worshipped. There are hymns used by the pupils which turn the attention to a God who is "above the bright blue sky." Lesson courses are improving rapidly, but the writers do not always bear in mind that where the name "God" is used for teaching purposes in interpreting the Christian religion, it is the God of Jesus who should be borne in mind.

### III. PROBLEMS OF EXPERIENCE.

#### 1. *The Character of the God-Conscious Man—The Holy Spirit.*

The pupils must be led to see that the whole of life is touched by one's religious attitude. The method and the spirit of all one's activities show the degree to which one responds to fellowship with God. Often the character of the God-conscious man is misjudged and misinterpreted. People are often guided by pure and righteous motives when their actions are misread. Children are often persuaded to believe that they are through and through vile sinners, when they may be showing many genuine Christian traits. We continually see acts performed for ourselves and for others by those whose character has been moulded, sometimes unconsciously, towards ideal standards. Their actions should be given a right interpretation by the teacher, not so much that credit be given as that life be made intelligible. Every person who is in politics must not be thought of as a crook. We have so long looked for God in definitions, in books, in exceptional phenomena, that we have neglected to recognize that where the spirit of love, joy and peace, patience and sympathy, and good will is, there is God.

Man is intended by God to be His agent in the world. Man is made in the image of God and he manifests this divine relationship through God-like action. Jesus revealed what that action should be like. Man is free to choose the course that manifests this divine spirit or to live a life that acknowledges no dependence on the divine and has no sense of self-giving. That is, he is free to follow the life of selfishness. The importance of the teacher here is well recognized. In addition to that inner urge in man, which if left to itself so slowly finds through wasteful methods the highest values of life, there is needed the added experience and guidance of those who have already learned the best way. Lack of knowledge of how and where to find God has kept many from making their contribution to the good will of the world. Here at least ignorance is not bliss.

The experience of knowing God and of submitting to His guidance is referred to as the presence of the Holy Spirit in man. "The meaning of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit," writes Cook,<sup>1</sup> "is that God is not only the Creator of the world, but that He is present in all the world, particularly in the heart of man, to guide and bless." The thinking of pure and uplifting thoughts, the urge to do what is right, and the carrying through of such feelings into action is God's Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit in man. So we can say that man has the help of the Spirit of God in right thinking and right acting, but lives apart from the Spirit of God in wrong practices. The Holy Spirit is not thought of as external, mechanical, but as a quality of life. Because there is such help of the Spirit, he is enabled to carry through unpleasant duties, see the lovely where the natural mind would see only the unlovely, attempt tasks which seem difficult or impossible, and which are only attempted with faith that God will see them through.

<sup>1</sup>E. A. Cook: *Christian Faith for Men of Today*. Univ. of Chicago Press. 1913. p. 83.



## 2. *What is sin? Conversion?*

Since the goal of endeavor is perfection, Jesus pointed out that there is none good but God (Mk. 10: 18). Men differ as to their relation to this goal; some strive to reach it; others are indifferent, and others still oppose it. Even those whose motive is right have the sense of shortcoming. Wherever self intrudes before the claims of love and duty, there is sin. The evil in the world results from man using his divine powers for selfish ends. As righteousness is the state where there is perfect harmony in character as well as conduct with the will of God, so sin is the state of neglect of doing what one knows to be his duty. The sinful character grows through continuous estrangement from God and from godly people. Sin includes not only actively doing wrong but also failure to do the right by feeling that one has reached the goal by avoiding wrong conduct. No one can find God completely in a life of solitude and negation. It is a distorted view of man's relation to God to claim that growth can come apart from fellowship. The road to the goal of perfection is traveled only by love in action. So there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission.

Though man often declares by conduct and by word that "he is through with God," yet God never takes the stand that He is through with man, but always yearns for the reopening, through forgiveness, of the fellowship of which man has deprived himself. The emphasis that Augustine gave to the place of Adam's fall in explaining the sin of man does not put the responsibility for sin in the right place. It is wrong to make the child personally responsible for the sin of another. There is, however, this element of truth in the traditional view: the child's nature may be far short of what God intended it to be. Tendencies to evil have been handed down through the indulgences of his ancestors, and his environment is tinged

with much that is faulty. Had those who went before lived more perfect lives, then he too would be on a higher plane.

As the normal life is a life of fellowship with God, the sinful life is an abnormal state. So man must ever be on the alert to rid himself of those elements in his life which are at enmity with God. There should be a constant growth both in the individual and in the race of the spirit of love to God and to man.

No individual should be permanently satisfied with an immediate experience of what is commonly termed "conversion." Such an experience, if it has come to an individual, should be thought of as only one of many stepping stones which help him to realize the love and power of God. So, too, with the decisions of church councils. Decisions, whatever immediate value they may have, should not be regarded as so controlling that other and later discoveries which come from growing knowledge and experience, as far as they are in keeping with the spirit of true religion, shall be ruled out.

### 3. *What is Salvation?*

Salvation is thus best thought of, not as a finished act, but as a process. The view that salvation belongs wholly to the future is not in keeping with the New Testament idea of "life eternal." A doctor told the writer recently that many of his Roman Catholic women patients refused to take anything to alleviate pain, believing that the more they suffer here, the better chance they will have for a life of happiness after death. Salvation to many, Protestants as well as Roman Catholics, means an escape from punishment in the future. Forgiveness and salvation come only with the repentance of sin, and the desire to put one's self into the purposes of God. As salvation is related to growth, it is true to say that the limits of perfection are never reached, yet where there is a deepening acquaintance

with God, and a growth in unselfishness, there the process of salvation is being wrought out.

It seems natural to think that the future life offers opportunity for further development along such lines. If working for the progress of God's kingdom on earth is an unwelcome task for many apparently pious people, and waiting for a happy release is their conception of what the earthly life should be, then one may justly infer that the future life when realized will prove equally distasteful.

#### 4. *The Place of Freedom and Conscience.*

It is now felt that many of the tendencies of the young, which were thought evil and hence suppressed, are necessary. Thus the theory held until recently that play must not be allowed in the school has now given way to the view that learning and play are closely related. We ought to accommodate ourselves to the laws of God. Play is one of these elements in life implanted by God, and must have a place. Freedom is allowed to indulge in play or to neglect it, but where play is omitted, life is less complete. The right thinking person will try to accommodate himself to the laws of physical and spiritual development, but he is not forced to do so. The choice rests with himself. Without this freedom, man would sink to the level of the animal. But man has it within him to build up ideals and to march towards an upward goal, to seek the better in contrast to the worse. This is called "conscience." But the urge to do good may express itself in an act which is really evil, for example, committing murder in the name of religion. Most people would attempt to give plausible excuses for reprehensible acts. So the teacher must see that the ideal in belief and conduct which is accepted is based on the best view available. Unless help is given to the growing child in setting standards, there may be a permanent warp in judgment for the whole of life.

## V. GOD IN THE WORLD.

We think of our knowledge of God as coming in two ways. We know God and know about Him. We experience God, and we infer there is a God. We feel Him, and we reason about Him. We have been dealing in this chapter mainly with the nature of God in experience. But in addition people have looked outside of themselves and felt that here too is evidence of such love and power as come through experience. Therefore, here too must be God. He must be in the onward progress of history, for in history we find Jesus. In the great upheavals of the passing generations, good rather than evil seems in time to gain the upper hand. Purer ideals, finer consciences are seen to emerge; achievements of value, impossible in earlier ages, can be accomplished in our time. God is in history revealing His will and assisting man in his out-reaches towards perfection. Here is where one of the values of Bible study lies, i.e., in seeing the progress made in moral and religious conceptions.

It is in thinking of God in spiritual terms that men begin to doubt some of the miracle stories. Teachers are at a loss to discover any spiritual value in the turning of a human being into a pillar of salt, or in the causing of an axe to float. Thus ministers and Sunday School superintendents are frequently asked by Sunday School teachers if they must teach such stories as really happening and as revealing the nature of God. One should never hesitate to reply to such questions that nothing should be taught, from whatever source it is found, which does not reveal God as good and loving, and where Divine power is revealed, that power is the power of goodness and love. Merely power for its own sake—a mere exhibition of power—does not reveal God, nor interpret the character of God. Much teaching has to be unlearned in later years because the teacher or the parent has never really become

acquainted with the power discerned in the God of Jesus. The older people often become accustomed to their own confusion of thought but the younger minds, in their desire to unify their knowledge and experience and in their flashes of clearer insight, feel that God is often pictured as divided against Himself.

Fuller knowledge of God, fuller realization of His presence in the world and in life, leads to a more confident faith or trust in Him. Thinking of God in terms of capricious power develops fear. It was not ignorance but knowledge of God that gave Jesus his trust in God. Ignorance fears winds and withdraws within closed caves and closed dwellings; knowledge trusts winds and raises sails and makes windmills. Ignorance fears electricity; knowledge trusts it and uses it to light houses. For Jesus, knowledge of God casts out fear.

## VI. WHAT CHILDREN THINK OF GOD.

The following replies were given to the question "How would you tell a Japanese boy or girl what God is like?" (The question was put in this form because the subjects for missionary study for the year dealt with Japan). We are anxious to know what the pupils think. It gives us a start in dealing with them. It presents to us the problem. The pupils in this case had been using the Graded Lessons for years, but no special teaching preparatory to the writing of their replies was given.

### *Senior Department.*

God is like our fathers.

God cares for us and loves us. We know this because the Bible tells us that God revealed Himself through Jesus. Jesus lived a life of love.

God is a Father like our own, only better.

Our God is a righteous God and a God of Love.

God is a God of justice.

God is a spiritual Father. We communicate with Him in prayer.

God is Love.

God is a Teacher.

God is Light. He is our Benefactor.

Our Father, one who cares for our every need and what is best for us.

God is Life, Happiness, Love, Health.

He gives us everything we have. He is everything.

Someone to tell your troubles to.

When I think of God, I think of all the good in the world.

God is everyone's sole dependent.

God is everywhere but cannot be seen.

### *Intermediate Department.*

God was Creator of all things.

A loving Father.

God is a Spirit.

God sent His only begotten son to the earth to save all mankind.

God is Love.

God is Kind.

God is an ever-helping Spirit.

God is everywhere and ever-present.

God is honest.

God guides us.

God is necessary to life.

He is Truth, Love.

He is like an earthly Father.

God is a Creator.

God is a just God.

God is kind.  
God is loving.

*Junior Department.*

He is our heavenly Father, who watches over us.  
A Helper.

The only God worth worshipping. He wasn't made out  
of stone wood. He is the Father of us all. His  
name is Jesus Christ.

He is our heavenly Father.

He is our Father. We should thank Him for all we get.  
Creator of heaven and earth and of all things.

God is like Jesus.

God is very good—truth.

God gives us our food.

God rules over us all.

God is a Spirit.

God is a miracle.

God cures sick people.

The Japanese boy should be told to come to Sunday  
School to learn about God.

God is Love.

God is good.

God is kind.

God helps you when you are sick.

God is loved by us.

God punishes you when you are very naughty.

God tries to make bad children good, and if they wont,  
he punishes them.

God tries to make us feel happy when we don't feel happy.

The frequency of the association of God with human need  
is to be noted. Only the older classes attempt abstract state-  
ments. Few give formal definitions, though the frequency of

"God is Spirit" and "God is Love" may suggest the repeating of a definition. The replies show that God is thought of as the Creator of all things. His love and kindness overshadow any idea of severity. His interest in and benevolent care for humanity is the most frequent idea. The spiritual conception of God is not grasped until the Senior age.

For Junior children, and to a large extent for Intermediates, generalized terms would not be understood if used in prayer. As the essential characteristics seem to be understood, it can only be harmful to give any teaching that would suggest wrong views of God. Mary Whitley in her recent book<sup>1</sup> relates how a ten year old child doubted the truth of the story of Elisha and the bears, saying that God wouldn't do such things. At an early age children can distinguish various presentations of the idea of God.

<sup>1</sup>Mary Whitley: *A Study of the Junior Child*. Westminster Press. 1923. p. 146.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### TEACHING THE IDEA OF GOD

#### FACTORS BEARING ON THE TEACHING PROCESS

##### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

##### I Introduction.

1. Factors involved in teaching.

##### II The View Point in Teaching.

##### III The Pupil Himself.

1. Interest.
2. Response.
3. Importance of the concrete.
4. Group instinct.
5. Reading habit.
6. Religious problems real.

##### IV The Environment as a Factor in Teaching.

1. Home.
2. School.
3. Community.

##### V The Place of the Teacher.

1. Personality.
2. Knowledge.
3. Method.
4. Aim.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### TEACHING THE IDEA OF GOD

#### FACTORS BEARING ON THE TEACHING PROCESS

##### I. INTRODUCTION.

##### 1. *Factors involved in teaching.*

In making God real the teacher has to bear in mind that more is to be considered than the content of the teaching, important as that is. As we have already pointed out, mere thinking about God does not result in intimacy with God, nor in the life through which one expresses the meaning of God effectively. Later we shall study the type of character toward which the pupil's life should be directed, but it is necessary here to consider certain factors which the teacher has to consider in regard to the nature of the pupil, his environment, and the place of the teacher himself.

##### II. THE VIEW POINT IN TEACHING.

Much teaching in the past has tended to obscure rather than reveal God to young minds. God as revealed in the course of history, in the world of nature, and in the nature of man has largely been overlooked. The older method of teaching is shown in the type of study undertaken. The Sunday School was a Bible School. There one learned the truth of God once for all delivered, which was held to be equally efficacious for people of all ages and for all time. This study was expected to lead to real religion which was felt to be something that

came through the conversion experience. The Bible still should have a large place; the experience of conversion often marks a necessary and important stage in the development of a Christian life, but to be "born again" (as well as to be born) implies later growth and development. So today it is felt that the Church School must make its aim the revealing of God in all His aspects so as to give the fullest help in directing religious lives. The view is not now accepted that there is a gulf between man's religious nature and the physical and mental sides of his being. The child should grow up with the consciousness that religion is really a part of every-day living. This is how Jesus regarded it. Because the pupil grows up in a life of relationships, because his physical, mental, moral, religious and social life are all bound up together, he is continually faced with the task of relating his whole life to the will of God. An over emphasis by religious leaders on thought on the one hand or on emotion on the other, limits the breadth of outlook and of sympathy. The training should include thought, emotion and expression. It is the work of religious education to aid the pupil to face all his problems so that the will of God be realized in him and in society. The powers in man which express the will of God are open to influence and may be definitely changed through direction from outside. All the factors which so contribute, through information, inspiration and training, should be organized in such a way that their influence is constructive and effective. There will be development in any case, but the direction of that development as it is touched by external influence should be upward.

The child comes into the world with infinite possibilities which come to light with growing years. Instead of thinking of the Church School as planting the seed we ought to think of God as the planter, and the Church School as one of the agencies which aid in its nurture. The capacity is there for

good, and it is probably not too much to say that good is more attractive than evil, but where training, whether conscious or unconscious, has downward tendencies, then the child becomes a curse to himself and a burden to others. Not only his own capacity but the influence of the environment and training aid in enabling him to take his place in the Kingdom of God. His growth in knowledge, in feeling and in action should be a gradual progress in enlightenment, in hope that is not clouded by fear, and in genuine accomplishment. "I thought it was a Sunday School you have here, but you seem to run it as a training school," said an interested spectator, after visiting a School that tried to carry out a modern program. The Church School is teaching the God of Jesus best when it is aiding the pupil to realize the most perfect expression of his powers.

In giving this training, religious educators feel strongly that use has to be made of more than one channel. Though it is coming to be accepted more and more that training through the ear is not sufficient, and the value of training through the eye and through feelings and action is being more and more realized, yet the methods for these additional channels are just beginning to be worked out. Where the necessity for such is realized, handwork is undertaken in the Sunday School; projects that require individual initiative are encouraged, and the programs undertaken by Boys' and Girls' Clubs are introduced. This marks a great revolution in educational theory and methods in our time. The more the sources of energy are tapped, the more are God's ways revealed; the more these resources are developed, the finer and truer will be the expression of the Christian life. Life on a low plane is more often the result of ignorance of the spiritual powers God has given man than of lack of physical and mental equipment. The completeness of Jesus suggests the untapped resources of human possibilities, and shows the progress that must be made

before the goal set by Jesus when he said "be ye perfect," is reached.

### III. THE PUPIL HIMSELF.

#### 1. *Interest.*

One finds that the pupil delights in the associations and the tasks connected with the Church School. Pupils often prefer to attend the Sunday School session rather than to go riding with their parents while their companions are in the Sunday School. "I miss the things we do at our Sunday School," wrote a pupil during the summer holiday season when the school was closed. Where the fellowship they have in worship and in comradeship is uplifting, where there is common consideration of the problems of life with a view to attaining to the best standards, and where there is the undertaking of helpful tasks, there one sees Jesus' idea of God in its best application. For most pupils, it seems to be quite the natural and proper thing to do to meet together under guidance, and talk over life's ideals, consider motives for action, and develop right habits. The pupils are often the first to realize that they are not born with right attitudes and abilities sufficient for all situations and are quite ready to admit that there is a place for growth and development and therefore for training. Parents know that the child naturally searches for and inquires about God.

#### 2. *Response.*

Following the interest comes the response. The pupil's willingness to respond is the teacher's greatest asset. The pupil does not admire the teacher who lets him "carry on" without purpose or goal. He admires most the teacher who himself has a strong Christian faith and who can help him realize such a faith for himself. Particularly in the junior

and intermediate years, he is instinctively drawn to personalities rather than to abstract ideas. He is a ready imitator. He therefore must early be directed to Jesus, both for the purpose of making Jesus a companion and an ideal, and in order that he may through imitation practice the divine qualities of love and good will seen in Jesus.

This response naturally varies with different children. With some action bulks largely; with others emotion predominates; while others are thoughtful and mystical. Hence the teacher must consider the nature of each child and encourage a well-balanced outlook. Yet an identical response must not be insisted on for each person, for all can draw inspiration from Jesus.

### 3. *Importance of the concrete.*

Jesus' method is to be imitated; he was concrete and dramatic. He used the story method and the illustration freely. He dealt with phases of life which were familiar to the experience of his hearers. God was spoken of in terms of the family. To illustrate the character God desires, Jesus gave such stories as the good Samaritan. The teacher should follow a similar method in order to get a ready and intelligent response on the part of the pupil. The interest of the pupil of the junior and intermediate and senior years centers around real life. He is interested in definite acts and concrete situations. The ability to analyze and generalize comes only with growing years and experience. Such general terms as grace, incarnation, redemption, atonement, mercy, justification, are not within his grasp. Dramatic presentations have a strong appeal. The pupils are interested in imitating people who accomplish things. So the teacher should make use of the dramatic instinct to carry out into action desirable ideals.<sup>1</sup> Emotion is aroused

<sup>1</sup>The Sunday School teacher should keep in touch with the recent developments along the line of dramatics.

more readily from concrete than from abstract presentations, and emotion is a more direct guide to conduct than the reasoned consideration of what is best. At least this is true in the years in which we are mainly interested in this study. The value of right feelings cannot be overestimated. Therefore concrete and dramatic illustrations should be used to arouse sympathy and good will, generosity, gratitude and reverence. The pupil will learn reverence through planning and leading a service of worship more readily than through being merely a passive spectator.

#### 4. *Group Instinct.*

Other characteristics which if recognized and utilized will aid in the teaching process are the group instinct and the reading habit. The group spirit is strong during most of the Church School period, and particularly in the later junior and intermediate years. This is clearly evidenced in the difficulty one has in trying to unite two Sunday School classes or in adding members to an already well organized group. The use of this group interest should be considered by the teacher in undertaking co-operative tasks, and a lesson should never be complete until each pupil in the group has made his contribution.

#### 5. *Reading Habit.*

There is an absorbing interest in reading in the later junior age and during adolescence. Most pupils of this age will read anything that they can get that they understand. This interest should be directed so that it will have a religious value. The study course should offer a list of supplementary reading which should be made available for the class. The Sunday School should encourage this larger scope for reading and direct it



into useful avenues, feeling that wherever truth and goodness and love are found, there is God.

#### 6. *Religious Problems Real.*

It is well for the teacher to recognize that the pupil has real religious problems. These problems are related to his ideas and emotions and his actions, and have a direct bearing on his behavior in connection with his adjustment to his world, in the home, the school and the play ground. If his problems are not given a religious solution while he is facing them, he may never feel that religion has any definite contribution to make to the problems of life. Modern pedagogy holds that if religion is to be a personal possession, then it must be interpreted so as to enable the pupil to live at his best now, and to meet those problems which he is at present encountering. We have noted how Jesus turned from formal theology and sacrifice and ceremonial to the more vital problems of the adjustment of the individual to daily life. The unity that Jesus gave to all thinking, feeling and conduct is an ideal which the teacher should bear in mind.

### IV. THE ENVIRONMENT AS A FACTOR IN TEACHING.

#### 1. *Home—School—Community.*

Modern teaching methods take into account the fact that the pupils are living in a social world. The first test of the value of the truth that is presented is not that it has had value in other situations in the past, or that it will have a purpose in the future, but that it will give assistance in present social situations. The fact that the principles taught have been a power for good in the past and that they have shown qualities of persistence will, of course, add to their value today. But the teacher wishes to know what knowledge, what emotional

attitudes, what activities will help in making the kingdom of God real and effective in the present life of the pupil. The teacher cannot forget that the problems of the pupil are problems of home relationships, school relationships (both day and church schools), community relationships (adjustment to the civic environment of policemen, movies, street gangs, and later on business and politics), and that there are continuous readjustments to make with each stage of growth.

The authority of the home frequently gives place to the authority of the school and of "public opinion." As the child grows in years, "Teacher says so," or "Everybody does it," is the reason given for a certain course of action. Thus he begins to feel the pull of the wider world. The conscious and the unconscious power of such additional authorities is seen in an extreme form in comparing the boy or girl who has been continually guarded by the home and shielded from external influences, even to the extent of growing up under private tutors, and the one who has grown up without any limitations to his horizon.

The environment presents choices. There is always the possibility of imitating good manners or bad manners, of forming wholesome or harmful companionships, of using one's leisure to increase one's store of good health, or to exhaust one's physical resources, of being controlled by every evil contact or waging a constant warfare against what degrades. The social instinct is there and will be satisfied. How? The Sunday School must exert its influence, first, in seeing that helpful relationships are provided, and secondly, that harmful influences are removed. The influence of the Sunday School must be positive. It must aid in providing helpful social contacts, and it must give the pupil training in the power of discrimination.

The power of the home in moulding the character of

children is immense. There is an intimacy and a naturalness about home life that is never quite reached elsewhere. It is the first environment of the child as well as the most lasting in its influence. It is important for the teacher to know whether in the home the child learns reverence, or irreverence, whether the work of the Church School is looked upon with approval or as being without any real value, whether the child is neglected or petted, whether he has limited or abundant associations with brothers, sisters, playmates, whether home duties are carried on under autocratic or democratic compulsion, whether recreation is withheld, permitted or overstressed. The Church School teacher must appreciate the fact that there is a home influence where heredity and environment and opportunity for expression sometimes aid, sometimes hinder his endeavor to promote the growth of the kingdom in the life of his pupils.

The second great influence on the growing boy or girl is the school. Here there are made the daily contacts with teacher and pupils, in studies and in play, in fellowship and in rivalry. Here is opened up the world of fact, of ideas and of adventure, as revealed through studies. The Church School teacher must keep pace with the pupil in his progress in school friendships and in knowledge. The school and the church are not antagonistic to each other. The Church School must rather be diligent to show the religious relations of the facts studied and the increased religious opportunities offered by the modern world. One can never think of school studies as wholly secular and the studies of the Sunday School as alone revealing God. Such a dividing line confuses the pupil, where studies are parallel and purposes similar. Both attempt to make the pupil at home in God's world, and to aid him in making a worthy contribution to the onward and upward progress of humanity.

Even before school life begins the community has begun to mould the pupil's life and character. And after school days are over its influences still persist. The type of community in which his home is placed, the opportunity for companionship among neighbors, the type of moving picture show frequented, the chances for sightseeing outside his limited home area, contacts with great music and art, chances for seeing and engaging in the productive activities of life—this is where the boy and girl face real life. All else has a tinge of artificiality.

In this world at large, as Jesus felt, with its facts which are open to the senses, with its history and its politics, with its occupations, with its hopes, was God to be found; in such relationships was the kingdom of God to be realized. In this same world should God be found today. It is the duty of those who guide in religious education to aid in making this environment helpful and uplifting. But each individual, too, has a duty in making love and good will supreme. The responsibility that each must bear will be considered in the last two chapters.

## V. THE PLACE OF THE TEACHER.

### 1. *Personality.*

The problem constantly before the teacher is this: how, considering the pupil's inherited ability, his opportunity and his training, can he be aided in living a life of reverence, good will, loyalty, helpfulness, justice, a life that lives with God and for God? How can these qualities be so made a part of his life that they will be the normal and ready response in all circumstances? Such an expression as "accepting Christ" can have no higher meaning than the expressing in one's life of such divine qualities as were so manifest in Jesus himself. This goal must be attained by the teacher himself before

effective teaching can be done. The teacher's own personality, his own method of acquiring and using knowledge, his own expression of the ideals which he teaches will often speak louder than his words. The influence which he thus unconsciously exerts will often be the most effective part of his contact with his class. "The best teacher," says Coe,<sup>1</sup> "is one in whom the pupil feels the presence of religion as a concrete, natural and attractive thing."

## 2. *Knowledge.*

The class meeting is an opportunity for the gathering together and the sifting of experiences. The information that is gained from all sources, the Bible, history, literature, nature, science, art, is here considered. The conduct that is practiced as seen through reading and observation, in the Bible, in biography, in contemporary life, is studied, attention being paid to the motives for action and the results. All the discussions, projects and readings should be carried on in the light of present day individual and social needs. It should be the aim and the joy of the teacher that none shall pass into manhood or womanhood without having adopted the interpretation that the religion of Jesus has to offer of the facts of life and the motives of conduct.

The teacher will go to the Bible because nowhere else have we so great a collection of records of people whose lives were guided by religious motives. But the fact that the Bible is a book prepared by adults and written largely for adult readers makes it necessary that care be taken in the selection and the interpretation of its contents for the younger minds, so that a prejudice be not aroused through misunderstanding or failing to appreciate its contents, or through adaptation of material

<sup>1</sup>G. A. Coe: *Education in Religion and Morals*. Revell. 1904. p. 310.

to such an extent that the Bible is abused. One's approach to the Bible should not be such that one lays aside his powers of discrimination in regard to what will help in meeting life problems and in developing faith in a God of love and justice and law rather than in a God of arbitrary and capricious power. Lesson courses in use in junior departments present material which causes teachers much difficulty. Even juniors test these Bible stories in the light of their experience, and sometimes they early develop an attitude of scepticism. It is difficult to find in some of the stories used examples of the permanent and all-embracing love of God.

The teacher will go to the world of nature and of human relationships and human characteristics. These have often been interpreted as having no direct relation to the divine, whose activities must be sought for in what is not known. One should rather feel that God's resources and His mode of action are in part at least apparent in what we see and know and feel. So the teacher will himself go to all sources which make this world intelligible, which reveal human characteristics and their possibilities, all sources which show the working out of the problems of religion as presented by Jesus, and feel that he is on holy ground.

### 3. *Method.*

But in the actual teaching the teacher has to learn to keep himself in the background. It is not primarily for the education of the teacher that the Church School is conducted, although the teacher should welcome the opportunity presented for increasing his own knowledge and usefulness. It is the pupil whose knowledge has to be increased, whose attitudes have to be developed, whose conduct has to be directed. There is satisfaction that comes from searching, finding and declaring to others the results of one's work. The teacher should not

alone have this experience. Wherever such satisfaction can be associated with learning, there learning is made a joy, and the results are more abiding. Yet the entire control of the class ought not to be handed over to the pupils. The teacher must be ready to arouse interest and suggest objectives. He must aid in mapping out the work, and sometimes contribute to the carrying out of the plans. He must pass judgment on the results that have been achieved.

#### 4. *Aim.*

The teacher must never lose sight of the aim of all Church School work. It is not primarily a preparation for future bliss or for self-improvement. The ideal for thought, for attitude, for conduct is Jesus. His knowledge of God and his consciousness of God's direction and help led him to live a life of active good-will. The pupils of the Church School are capable too, in their limited way, of just such conduct. And the task of the teacher is to present the training that will make this the desired response to all situations, so that a Christian social order be achieved.

We have here been approaching the subject from the teacher's standpoint. In the remaining two chapters, the pupil himself will be in the center of our thinking.





## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE BEARING OF JESUS' IDEA OF GOD ON LIFE

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

##### I Introduction.

1. The Problem of Personal Responsibility.

##### II Man's Need Satisfied.

##### III The Ideal Is

1. Trust in God.
2. Through Jesus.
3. Calling for a life of love and good-will.

##### IV The Results.

1. In personal qualities.
2. In social achievements.
3. Rewards and punishments.

##### V What Children Think Is Expected of Them.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE BEARING OF JESUS' IDEA OF GOD ON LIFE

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

##### 1. *The Problem of Personal Responsibility.*

"He that humbly serves mankind receives God within his soul."<sup>1</sup> Jesus did not argue about God nor formulate statements about Him. His main emphasis was on the matter of expressing in character and conduct the will of God. So it remains for us, in the following chapters, to direct our attention to the individual and consider the character and conduct which he should aim to make his own. The work of the teacher alone cannot bring the pupil to the attitude of trust in God and to a life of good will. Jesus knew that it was possible to throw pearls before swine, though he never admitted that any person need permanently remain in the wallow. A responsibility lies with each person, for we are to a large extent what we wish to become. We are never permanently satisfied with external direction and control.

#### II. MAN'S NEED SATISFIED.

The pupil should realize that Jesus' insight into man's need has stood the test of time, that it has been worth while for man to seek God in intimacy and reverence, and to desire that the doing of His will should dominate all other desires. Man has discovered that the nearer he has kept to the ideal that Jesus has given, the fuller and more satisfying has been his

<sup>1</sup>Dougall and Emmet: *The Lord of Thought*. p. 215.

own life. Emotion, action, as well as thought, are aroused. Had Jesus given merely an intellectual conception of God, the deepest motives of conduct, as we saw in the previous chapter, would have been untouched. Because man has found in Jesus something that satisfies he has come to learn that it is the religion that Jesus had which he too must experience. Such intimacy with God, and such dependence, and such expectation of help as Jesus had has always rewarded man the nearer he approached to it. And through man's expression of love and good-will to others, he has grown in character, has developed a keener conscience and has advanced in the accomplishment of a larger brotherhood of mankind.

Many problems have had to be faced since Jesus' day which had not entered into man's thought up to that time. The world of nature has unfolded many wonders; the body and mind of man have delivered up many of their secrets; the world of human relations has become more complicated; but the God of Jesus has always met man's developing needs. Jesus' insight into man's need was complete, and the goal he set for man's endeavor can never be surpassed. He calls on man to be perfect, like God. When complete love and goodness and truth are attained then the goal is reached. Yet the goal is not so far removed that it has not in part been realized. Differing from much pagan philosophy that assumed that the world is to be avoided, or thought of as apart from religion, the faith of Jesus is to be identified with the facts and relationships of this life, and is intent on modifying them in conformity with the will of God. That real progress has been made is noted by Ellwood:<sup>1</sup> "In spite of the fact that our human world is still so marred by evidences of hatred and ill-will, yet it is undoubtedly true that in the last two thousand years sympathy and good-will will have expanded enormously."

<sup>1</sup>C. A. Ellwood: *Christianity and Social Science*. Macmillan. 1923. p. 128.

## III. THE IDEAL IS

1. *Trust in God.*

Man must learn to trust in God. This attitude of trust was at the very heart of the religion of Jesus and was the ideal for his followers. For him God's guidance had not terminated in the past, nor is the present a time of waiting for a later and fuller fellowship. The future indeed, Jesus felt, held out great expectations, but in the present God was to be sought in personal fellowship. God is always near and always helpful just because He is God. God has His plans for mankind and is willing to do His part in carrying them through. So the whole responsibility of bringing in the Kingdom does not rest with man. If so, the task would be impossible. It is God's Kingdom and God's task, and man is not left to himself in establishing it. Man must believe that God reigns and is working to bring everything under His sway. But since it is a Kingdom where men mingle with one another, they too have a conscious part to take. Man first believes that it is God's plan to establish His Kingdom; this belief awakens in him the sense of his own responsibility, and this consciousness of responsibility results in his own endeavor to advance the will of God. There is a close relation between trust and action.

2. *Through Jesus.*

Jesus' task was to help each person to realize his place in the family of God, and to assume his individual responsibility. Such phrases as "Trust in Jesus" and "Imitation of Jesus" may convey a wrong meaning of the place of Jesus in the attainment of Christian character. Man is not to lose his individuality and become a mere echo. He is, for example, not to follow slavishly the feet washing incident (Jn. 13:15), but to have the spirit of service in daily living. From Jesus one

gets direction and inspiration, but the character that each is to grow into is to be his own. Thus Jesus was careful not to lay down rules but to point out that God's chief interest is in the motive that guides man. Goodness is never slavish imitation.

It is the custom in some quarters to compare Jesus' separate sayings with those of other men of his time or of an earlier day, and say that Jesus gave nothing new to the world. But Jesus' contribution did not consist in giving utterance to new ideas so much as putting occasional and partly understood ideas of the past in their right setting, and in showing by word and by his life their bearing on the ideal character for man. Thus it is right to think of Jesus in a way that one cannot think of other men of His time, and to feel with Paul that men henceforth ought to pattern themselves after him.

Men are to follow Jesus by having the same spirit; by being directed by the same motive. Jesus saw that the life of his time had no unifying principle. This he supplied through singling out from all the various interests of mankind and from all the various solutions that had been offered to the problems of life the command of love to God and to one's fellows. This is something that each man must make his own, and express in his own daily intercourse with his fellows.

With the ideal that Jesus set in mind, man is continually discovering new ways of putting his call to love and service into practice. This brings more satisfaction than the obeying of rules. Jesus would have man advance by the project method. Today men have learned that they must face the large task of bringing the whole social and political world into harmony with the teaching of Jesus. A larger task is recognized today than ever before, and in framing their life attitudes the young people must gain this larger vision of the kingdom of God.

### 3. *Calling for a Life of Love and Good-will.*

Man's first step towards intimacy with God is to recognize his dependence on God. His relation to God must be recognized as a personal matter. He is faced with the problem of choice. The Christian life is an achievement. Some have a fierce conflict of soul like Paul. Some advance with more regular progress. But it is not the manner of entrance that is important, but the result. The question is: Is the life that is led one of trust and obedience, is faith growing with knowledge and experience, is love finding constant expression in service? The life demanded is positive in character and expression. The soul is shaped in the trials, temptations, tasks and joys of daily living (cf Lk. 21: 19). Character is to grow because the motive is right. It is not acts of kindness, patience, forgiveness, humility, that make one perfect. One must look behind these acts to the motive. It is because of the character behind them that these acts are the normal, regular and urgent outlet. The unity of life that Jesus called for was a unity of motive, not a unity of expression. The expression will vary, according to individual characteristics and opportunities. Jesus recognized that men had different talents.

Man's character is to be judged by his value as an individual (Mt. 18: 14). The Jew felt that he deserved special consideration from God because of his national attachment. Jesus taught that it is man's individual worth that counts. Jesus' ideal calls forth the best in strong men and tends to make weaklings strong. It is not easy to forgive, nor to be merciful, nor to be faithful, nor to offer justice to all. To think of Jesus' teaching as appropriate only for weaklings and slaves is to miss the character of his teaching. Man's worth is not shown by his keeping of ancient tradition, nor by formal practices of religion as fasting and praying, nor by his abandonment of worldly interests. It is shown in his acceptance of his place

of sonship under the divine Father, and in considering the bearing of all his acts in relation to God. It is shown in the way he responds to the needs of others. The spirit of helpfulness will find constant outlet. Thus with such social contact one's worth is increased many fold. Pagan virtues are self-centred. Christian virtues do not grow if confined only to the individual. He that loesth his life shall find it. But one is not to lose it through seclusion, but through the unselfish contribution one makes to the need of the world. Jesus never intended that qualities of worth should go to waste. This attitude of helpfulness should be spontaneous. Law is reduced to the demands of love. It requires the type of action towards others that one desires done to one's self.

Worry and anxiety are to be ruled out. At least this is true for those who live lives of trust in God. But careful planning is not to be neglected. The wise virgins were freed from worry because of their foresight, but the foolish virgins were brought to a state of worry because of their carelessness. We are to carry through carefully each duty that presents itself.

Man's efforts are not to be expended in accumulating things. Spiritual things go first. Absorbing interest in the accumulation of wealth, in the display of wealth, and in self-indulgence gives wealth a wrong emphasis and shuts out spiritual influences. Rich men will find it difficult to attain to the Kingdom.

If a person is to contribute to his best, he must plan to make his work effective. He must consider the personal factors which enter into effective service. Man has control to a large extent over his bodily vigor, the training he undergoes in mind, the trend of his thoughts, the activities he undertakes. He should aim at presenting a complete manhood, complete in health, in culture, in skill. God has already placed in him the desire for growth and development. If he suppresses this desire and remains undeveloped and stagnant, he cannot render



a good account of his stewardship. The sense of constant improvement should possess him. His training will not be thought of as something confined only to the school. Here he only begins to learn what it means to be guided by authorities and how to gain in knowledge and skill. Our acceptance of the lordship of Jesus should lead us to desire for ourselves a body that will endure hardness, a mental life that is well informed, a moral life that is sure of its standards, a religious life that knows whom and what it believes. In the light of the range and the poise of Jesus, one cannot rest satisfied with low standards in regard to one's personal equipment. Man will not wish to be controlled by an overwrought emotional life, nor by a too intellectual bias, nor will he be so busy with many activities that he will not give time to thought. He will be well-balanced, loving the Lord with heart and mind and strength in due proportion.

In making life count as a member of the Kingdom, he will give care to the choice of a vocation. In making his decision he will be directed by the desire to do the will of God. It is right to consider one's capacity and one's tastes, but the choice should be made not with regard to the pleasantness of the work, for one's inclinations alone must not be in control. He must consider the opportunity it offers for service; he must desire to give rather than to get, to give more than he gets.

#### IV. THE RESULTS.

##### 1. *In personal qualities.*

The person who trusts in God will be humble. The pride and arrogance of the Pharisee will be foreign to his nature. He will not be given to passing judgment on others, though he will be given to self-judgment. He will be a person of forbearance; he will be ready to forgive. He will desire that his own

example will be such that others will see and glorify God. He will be faithful and sincere, knowing that God is interested more with the worker than the work. He will be a man of courage, not held back by fear, by trouble, nor by difficulty. He will be a man of purity in thought and life. He will be true to the best he knows, and so not sin against the Holy Spirit. And he will be hopeful. The person who follows Jesus should not be pessimistic, for the world is coming to realize more than ever that it is the ideals of Jesus that must prevail in order to have a well-ordered society.

## 2. *Social achievements.*

The Golden Rule links man up with society. His life is not to be lived in retirement. He will find his joy, not in renunciation of life, but in life itself. His is the abundant life. He will look to the good of others, and endeavor to remove whatever crushes and degrades. The primary aim is not the social good but the doing of the Father's will. The divine commands bring out such qualities as one can only exercise to his fellows. Thus, while pleasing God, one at the same time is building up an ideal brotherhood. Such an ideal condition of society is to be looked forward to with eager expectation. Opinion is divided as to whether Jesus thought of the Kingdom as something to be established by God altogether in the future<sup>1</sup> or as something which was already being established because of the right living of people now. Yet all would agree that Jesus wanted men to live now as if the Kingdom were come and to live with their neighbors such a life as would be lived when the Kingdom was established in the world. But is not the living of such a life the Kingdom itself, for the Kingdom was not one of political status, but of ideal relationships?

<sup>1</sup>See Prof. E. F. Scott's recent book: *Ethical Teaching of Jesus*. Macmillan. 1924.

The Kingdom is not to be a graded society in which wealth, or class, or position give man either place or prominence. Man's place in the Kingdom is determined solely by his status as a child of God and by the way he expresses love and good will to his neighbors. In this way only does he attain to the life of the Kingdom and grow into the likeness of God Himself.

As Jesus thought chiefly of the individual, he had little to say about the larger groups of society. The family, for him, is bound together not by legal enactments but by spiritual bonds, and these bonds should not be broken. He did not express any opinion about the type of political organization that should prevail. Where the interests are for moral and spiritual ends, the type of organization will not so very much matter. Nor was he interested in the church as an institution. He did not lay down rules for its leaders nor prescribe any type of organization. But he did train a small band of workers, and he expected that through the efforts of such followers, an ever-widening number would be led to trust implicitly in God and live such a life as God Himself lives.

Man must never be content with the social achievements of the past. Along with the growth of love in man, there grows a new insight into human needs. So man will see continually new relations that need adjustment.

### 3. *Rewards and Punishments.*

The matter of rewards is often held out as the goal for following the Christian life. And the type of reward is often thought of in a material sense. The Jewish hope for material reward still colors man's expectations for the future. But for Jesus the reward consisted in realizing for one's self the will of God. The reward is the life which is attained. The man who lives a righteous life merely for the hope of reward is condemned (Lk. 6: 35). Men are not to plan for or expect a

reward, but they are to devote themselves entirely to doing the will of the Father and living the life that belongs to the Kingdom. But such a life will result in a higher type of life. The reward consists in growing more and more into the likeness of the Divine. Even the rewards of heaven are usually interpreted by Jesus as the enrichment of life itself, rather than the attainment of material benefits. Jesus did not hold out any rewards as a bait to his disciples. He called them for service. He sometimes presented the difficulties rather than the advantages of discipleship. Through service the man gives life, and he gets back life, increased many fold. When at the end the divine approval is given, it comes as a surprise (Mt. 25: 3ff).

Punishments likewise are related to life. Where the law of the spiritual life is broken, punishment is the result. Where one refuses to believe in Jesus one misses eternal life and remains in darkness. Thus fear of future punishment or desire for future reward is a lower motive for right living than the love of God, and the desire that the qualities that belong to the Kingdom may prevail in human society. Neither rewards nor punishments can be definitely separated from daily life and experience.

#### V. WHAT CHILDREN THINK IS EXPECTED OF THEM.

In answer to the question, "What would you say to a Japanese<sup>1</sup> boy or girl was the kind of life God expected you to live?" the following answers were given:

##### *Senior Department:*

He would have us live a life of service and sacrifice.

We are to pattern our lives after the life of Jesus.

He wants us to live a pure life.

He wants us to live a good life.

<sup>1</sup>See page 78.

He wants us to live an unselfish life.  
He wants us to live a life of faith.

*Intermediate Department:*

God wants us to live a Christian life.  
To be true, kind, trustful.  
To obey the ten commandments.  
To help others.  
To do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.  
To do what we think is right.  
Live a helpful life.  
Follow the ten commandments.  
Go to Church and Sunday School.  
Help others through service and giving.  
Righteous.  
Must not use profanity (from a boy).

*Junior Department:*

Be good.  
To help others.  
Obey.  
We should do what He says.  
He wants us to do the things we should do.  
Be good to mothers.  
Do not do bad things that would not please God.  
Doesn't want us to do wrong things.  
Not to swear.  
Be good to one another.  
Help the poor.  
Obey the laws.  
Not to steal, kill.

Bring money and food to starving people.

God expects us to pray to Him.

Expects us to be good.

To follow Him.

Expects us to be kind.

God expects us to mind our parents and help them do work.

God expects us to be good all the time.

He expects us to treat other children nice.

When someone is naughty to you, help them to be kind and tell them God is listening.

God wants us to say our prayers every night, and not forget them.

To work good in school and Sunday School.

God likes us to play.

God likes us to be healthy.

Pupils show their interest in constructive living by putting their replies in a positive form. At least this is true of most of the replies. Another commendable phase which appears in these replies is that God is thought of as related to the whole of life and not confined to definite religious acts. Problems relating to obedience seem very prominent in the Junior age. Teachers should see that their teaching is not limited to the negative phases of obedience.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE BEARING OF JESUS' IDEA OF GOD ON LIFE (Continued)

#### OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

##### I Introduction.

1. Jesus and Modern Psychology.

##### II The Expression of Individuality.

1. The Problem of Choices.
2. The Problem of Varying Interest.

##### III Participation in Real Problems is Expected.

1. Educators to work for this goal.
2. The Place of Freedom.
3. The Place of Authorities.

##### IV The Problem of Natural Endowment.

1. Emotions.
2. Their Right Expression.
3. The Need of an Ideal.

##### V The Sense of Accomplishment.





## CHAPTER NINE

### THE BEARING OF JESUS' IDEA OF GOD ON LIFE

(Continued)

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

##### 1. *Jesus and Modern Psychology.*

Where one has not the attitude of intimacy and trust, nor lives the life of love and good will, one does not know the God of Jesus. In a vague way people realize that this is what the faith of Jesus is meant to bring. But instead of looking for this attitude as a by-product, religious education should learn to make it central. The use of the Bible will be a means to accomplish this end. We have seen how nature and history and science also help us to appreciate the God of Jesus. Psychology too finds that Jesus has given a clear-sighted interpretation of human resources and human needs.

"You know that I am a religious girl," said a young lady who had recently come into the community, while speaking with the superintendent in regard to her place in the new Church School. And her happy face showed that she associated religion with something that gave her joy. In being a religious person, in Jesus' sense, one's life is full of love, joy and peace, and one assumes duties which strengthen and build up character. The one who lacks faith in God, on the other hand, carries unnecessary burdens of grief and fear and is involved in all the narrowing experiences of selfishness. Psychology points out that it is the lack of just such elements as the Christian faith supplies which is the cause of many

neurotic disorders.<sup>1</sup> All man's emotions should never have free expression, nor are they all to be suppressed. For normal, healthy, well-balanced thinking, feeling and acting, the ideal of Jesus has never been surpassed. The growing person has a right to an active religious life.

## II. THE EXPRESSION OF INDIVIDUALITY.

### 1. *The Problem of Choices.*

Through controlled instruction and environmental influences the value of right knowledge and attitudes and activities has been impressed and practice in right choices has been furnished from earliest childhood. But the whole purpose of this work of external direction is to enable the pupil for himself to know what are right choices, to feel inclined to make them, and to proceed to execute them. He finds that there are three factors continually presenting problems to his own experience—the world about him, God, and his own nature. It is an individual and personal task to bring these into harmony and to try to adjust his nature and ability to the ideal life. It is not enough for him to have everything interpreted to him. He has a personal task before him, of sifting all his experiences in the light of his individual needs. It is true that the capacity to make choices between lower and higher ideals is not fully developed with the child. But he has a desire to follow an ideal and thus innate provision is made for his growth to higher moral and spiritual levels as he develops in age and experience. Dr. Bruce<sup>2</sup> gives a very striking sentence from Sir Thomas Overbury that the good man should "feel old age rather by the strength of his soul than by the weakness of his

<sup>1</sup>See Streeter: *The Spirit*. Macmillan. 1919. Chap. III, by Hadfield: *The Psychology of Power*. p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>W. S. Bruce: *The Psychology of Christian Life and Behavior*. T. & T. Clark. 1923. p. 23.

body." In uniting one's will with God and being guided by the motive of love and good will, as presented by Jesus, man has an ideal closely related to experience, and so does not need to rely on external authority of church or creed or book or teacher, except in so far as they make this ideal real to his experience. As we have been trying to point out, the religion of Jesus is not so much "taught" as it is "lived." In no stage of growth can one say absolutely that here religion begins. The religious attitude is present in the individual at any age whose life goes out in trust to God, and who is living in a relation of active good will to others. So the growing person must not assume that his religious expression is confined to controlled situations in the Sunday School or in any church group. In all his life of thought, emotion and action he should feel definitely called upon to decide matters in relation to his religious ideals. In all stages of development he should feel that he is presented with opportunities for growth in the knowledge and love of God and with ways of carrying out His will.

## 2. *The Problem of Varying Interest.*

But he should also know that there are times of greater intensity of religious feeling, or greater desire for knowledge, or for expression, than at other times; that his individual life can at different times be expressed more readily in one or other of these ways. This varying interest suggests the plateau experience so often discussed by educators. His heart will go out at one time to God as revealed in nature, at another time to God as His ways have been made known in history, and again to God as He speaks to the inner life. At one time he will wish to express his love in individual acts; at another time he will wish to unite with groups for the achieving of common ends. The natural interests of growing people will come up again in this chapter.

## III. PARTICIPATION IN REAL PROBLEMS IS EXPECTED.

1. *Educators work for this goal.*

In the method of teaching today, the active participation of the pupil is expected. The ideal method of conducting much of the work of education is through projects or co-operative enterprises. The pupil thus has a chance to display his initiative, and to cultivate habits of investigation, criticism, arrangement, judgment, and application. In this way there is avoided the erroneous idea that listening or doing the prescribed task gives one the best basis for character development. This method is in harmony with the idea that the work of the school is not a preparation for life but rather is life itself. Working together on a common problem, where each contributes of his ability, and where the group advances together towards a goal, brings out the qualities that make for a real Christian brotherhood. The teacher and pupils work together to discover and carry out the will of God. An older attitude towards the young was intent on filling their minds with good counsels and negating all their activities. This method is slowly giving way to recognition, encouragement and appreciation. Jesus put the child in the midst.

2. *The Place of Freedom.*

The freedom thus allowed for in religious work is not a freedom that should develop into license and disregard of all authority.<sup>1</sup> The teaching and life of Jesus are taken as the guide and authority. His way of intimacy with God is our way. His life of love and good will is for us to follow too. The application of this ideal has endless interest and variety. The followers of Jesus would not need to investigate whether

<sup>1</sup>See Coe: *Law and Freedom in the School*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1924. The whole book deals with this problem.

prayer has value or not. They proceed from the assumption that it has value and seek to discover how to make it real and effective. They do not need to waste time experimenting on the relation of ill-will and good-will to neighbors. They go out and seek to apply the Golden Rule. They do not need to investigate anew whether God is Fatherly or not, but rather should they strive to learn the meaning of trust. In all such investigations and applications, the motive must first be right. There must always be the aim of working towards the ideal for life and conduct. But within the limits of such a purpose, the opportunity to make choices and to exercise judgment are infinite. Thus a definite direction is given to any undertaking. With the possibilities for project work developed, one should expect to see a growing attachment to high ideals, a growing desire to know the nature and value of these ideals, and a growing control over self-conduct, together with the desire for adequate expression along helpful lines.

The church, the school, the home, the recreational activities, the community, the nation, all present their obligations. There should be participation in real problems. (Juniors delight to send toys to give pleasure to children in India.) Each person should have some line of personal responsibility. He should delight to offer free-will service, so that the ideals of life be realized for himself and for society. The fact that there are so many who are undernourished, and ignorant, and badly led, and following false personal and social ideals, should present a challenge to each. Duties that are forced on us are usually irksome. But the task of bringing in the Kingdom of God becomes a matter of individual compulsion to any who have accepted the ideals of Jesus, and the duties are self-imposed and gladly assumed. Where one accepts this responsibility, he will work along the lines of his capacity and interest, and so will be apt to accomplish more than he would through following external orders.

### 3. *The Place of Authorities.*

While one is never wholly satisfied with guidance yet one never gets away wholly from authority. Past or present formulated codes should not be recognized as an absolute authority. It is well to recognize that the standards of the present or of the past represent stages of growth. When the practice was to kill on sight for any real or imaginary wrong, the custom of taking an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth would represent an advanced stage of society. But this standard for conduct was surpassed later when the ideal was given of forgiveness for wrong done. Any formulated statement bears the marks of its historical situation, and however necessary for immediate stability, is necessarily limited in regard to future situations, which may demand a modification because of enlarged knowledge, or change of emphasis, or greater moral insight. Each new situation must be faced in the light of the ideal, and the appropriate action should not be hampered by an undue conservatism. We should stick to what is true and seek to apply it in such a way as to advance love and joy and peace in the world.

We shall treat as authority the ideal that Jesus has left and truth which is discovered in the light of the ideal, and the teacher and other leaders who can interpret the ideal to our intelligence, and we best honor them by submitting ourselves—mind, heart, and will—to what is thus presented to us as worthy of practice. For particular situations, it is frequently well for the group to formulate its own code which it will take as its guide. An interesting list used by a junior club is found in Whitley.<sup>1</sup> The making of such a list can be carried out effectively in the family, in boys' and girls' clubs, in the school. The question "What doth the Lord require of us" must be

<sup>1</sup>M. T. Whitley: *A Study of the Junior Child*. Westminster Press, Philadelphia. 1923. p. 151.

frequently asked. This is beneficial because of the practice it gives in setting standards and because of the assistance each of the group may render to the others in carrying them out. Where such a code is drawn up with the intention of applying the will of the heavenly Father to the problems of life, religion is made vital and effective.

It is in keeping with the needs of young people that they unite with organizations in which they may find companionship and opportunity for development and service. Intimacy with God loses its force unless one has intimate contact with his fellows. Not only do boys and girls and young people need their clubs, but the older people need their charity organizations, improvement societies, child welfare groups. After the ideal and the motive, there must come the machinery. There are greater achievements through co-operation than through individual enterprise. It is always helpful when the boy or girl thinks of the Sunday School or the club as "our" Sunday School or "our" club, and feels that it is carried on by him rather than for him. This makes an active rather than passive organization, and develops a valuable type of social consciousness. Many organizations are carried on for the sake of the organization. It is only when we put the individual and his values central that the organization can be really useful.

#### IV. THE PROBLEM OF NATURAL ENDOWMENT.

In considering what can be accomplished in achieving the ideal of Jesus, one has to consider the natural endowment and the developmental state of the individual. Psychologists have given much consideration lately to the bearing of one's physical, mental and spiritual condition and stage of growth on one's interests and capacities.<sup>1</sup> The fact that graded studies are now insisted on by all educators is the result of scientific principles.

<sup>1</sup>e.g. See Strayer and Norsworthy: *How to Teach*. Macmillan. 1917.

### 1. *Emotions.*

There is an emotional side of life which gives a direction to all one's interests. It is brought into play because of the instincts and impulses and appetites, which are a normal part of growing years, and which have an intimate bearing on one's interests and activities. Boys' and girls' clubs are easy to form because they satisfy an emotion that is constitutional. But the mere fact that they come together is not enough for them. Such groups call for leadership and direction. The leader is one whom they can imitate, and who can guide their powers of expression. A group was getting too unruly and boisterous. When called upon for better order, one of the worst offenders said that if they were given something definite to plan and carry out at each meeting there would be no trouble about order. Their desire for self-expression and display may result in confusion, but where linked up with a definite goal, chaos gives place to order. They want something to occupy their minds. There is a native desire for self-display, which may seem to run counter to the quality of humility that Jesus called for. But they are not antagonistic, for in Christian living, one's attention is not directed inwardly but outwardly, and the desire for self-expression becomes focused on the product. The follower of Jesus becomes more interested in seeing the success of a social or missionary undertaking in which he has taken a personal interest, than in seeing his own name on the front page of the newspapers.

### 2. *Their Right Expression.*

The nature with which we are born can be used in building up a character and a society that is in harmony with the ideal of Jesus. To be born again is not required because the nature which God supplied man with is inadequate but because the



use of man's original endowment has been misdirected through the following of low ideals. Fear, curiosity, pugnacity, self-assertion, self-abasement, the parental instinct, the tendency to imitate and emulate, the desire to be a cause,<sup>1</sup> to possess, the gregarious tendency—all these tendencies neither good nor bad in themselves, can be expressed in such a way as to give character its direction and build up the Kingdom of God. Education aims to bring to expression the responses which will result in useful and helpful lives, but in its final analysis the response is not the result of external direction but is individual. It is our response to an ideal which we have accepted. This is what gives us individuality and character. "The ideal," says McKenzie,<sup>2</sup> "is not some static conduct to which we are moving; it is the dynamic which determines our conduct now." Our desire for perfection will determine the form of expression we give to life and character. Fear will not be directed to God but to whatever prevents our approach to God. We will be ready to fight, not against our brother, but against whatever is debasing in life. We will not be led away by every mob enthusiasm but will associate ourselves with the groups that have uplifting influences. The parental instinct will go out to the care of the weak. Instead of such rivalry as begets bitterness, one can compete with one's own past efforts. In following the way of good will there is no harmful repression of instinctive tendencies. One rather puts to valuable use all tendencies that make life complete, and actions which express a wrong character will become more and more difficult.

<sup>1</sup>From seven months on, the writer noticed that a certain baby enjoyed having another imitate him in sound and movement as much apparently as he got pleasure out of imitating the sounds and movements of his parents. He would continue making certain sounds until he got their attention and response.

<sup>2</sup>J. G. McKenzie: *Modern Psychology and the Achievement of Christian Personality*. National Sunday School Union, London. p. 33.

### 3. *The Need of an Ideal.*

The greatest need of any individual is to have his whole self oriented towards an ideal that will bring out the best expression of his instincts and desires. Because Jesus calls for the best expression of man's whole being and because he himself showed the nature of such expression, no better permanent experience can come to man than to know and follow this ideal presented in the Gospels, which brings to expression in man the desire for truth, loyalty, justice, the joy of forgiving, and of sharing, delight in giving protecting care, the satisfaction of being a creator in building a new world. With such a right ideal from the first, presented through educational agencies and consciously appropriated, man would be freed from much worry and error, from useless waste of time and energy; but, on the other hand, would be continuously making a contribution to the good of the world. Children as well as adults are capable occasionally of reaching high levels of spiritual life. It was the expectation of Jesus that these high levels become permanent; so we pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

## V. THE SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

When the ideal is perfection, the sense of defeat and with it discontent are often present. It is keenly felt among teenage people. In answer to the question, "Is it easier to do good or to do evil?" a senior class of the Church School instantly gave the reply that the doing of evil was always the easier. Further questioning brought out the opinion from the class that their reply was a hasty one. It is true that the sense of failure is often with us, and it is well that failure should bring its feeling of disappointment. But this is not the note that should be made prominent in the religious education of the youth of our time. Let us see rather that they become familiar

with the accomplishments of the past, and the problems and opportunities of the present. Let us see that they know what advance has been made through the light and the life that has come to mankind through Jesus' effort to make God vital in the lives of men. Let us see also that the idea of God presented in the Church School is so closely related to life that the pupils will not only know Him, and love Him because they know Him, but will feel that the relation of His will to their lives calls for the undertaking of all tasks which are in keeping with the progress of love and good-will in the world.



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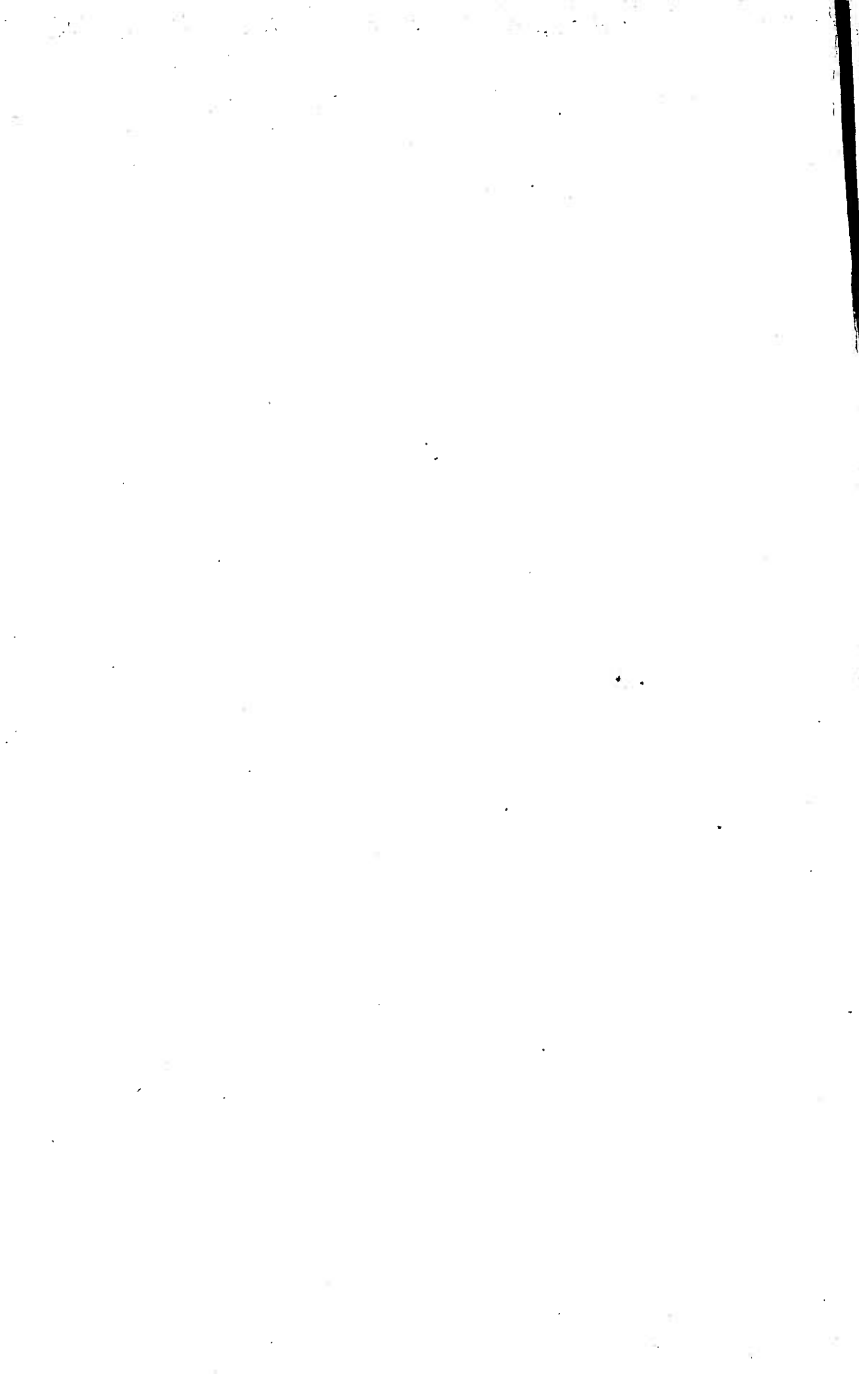
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